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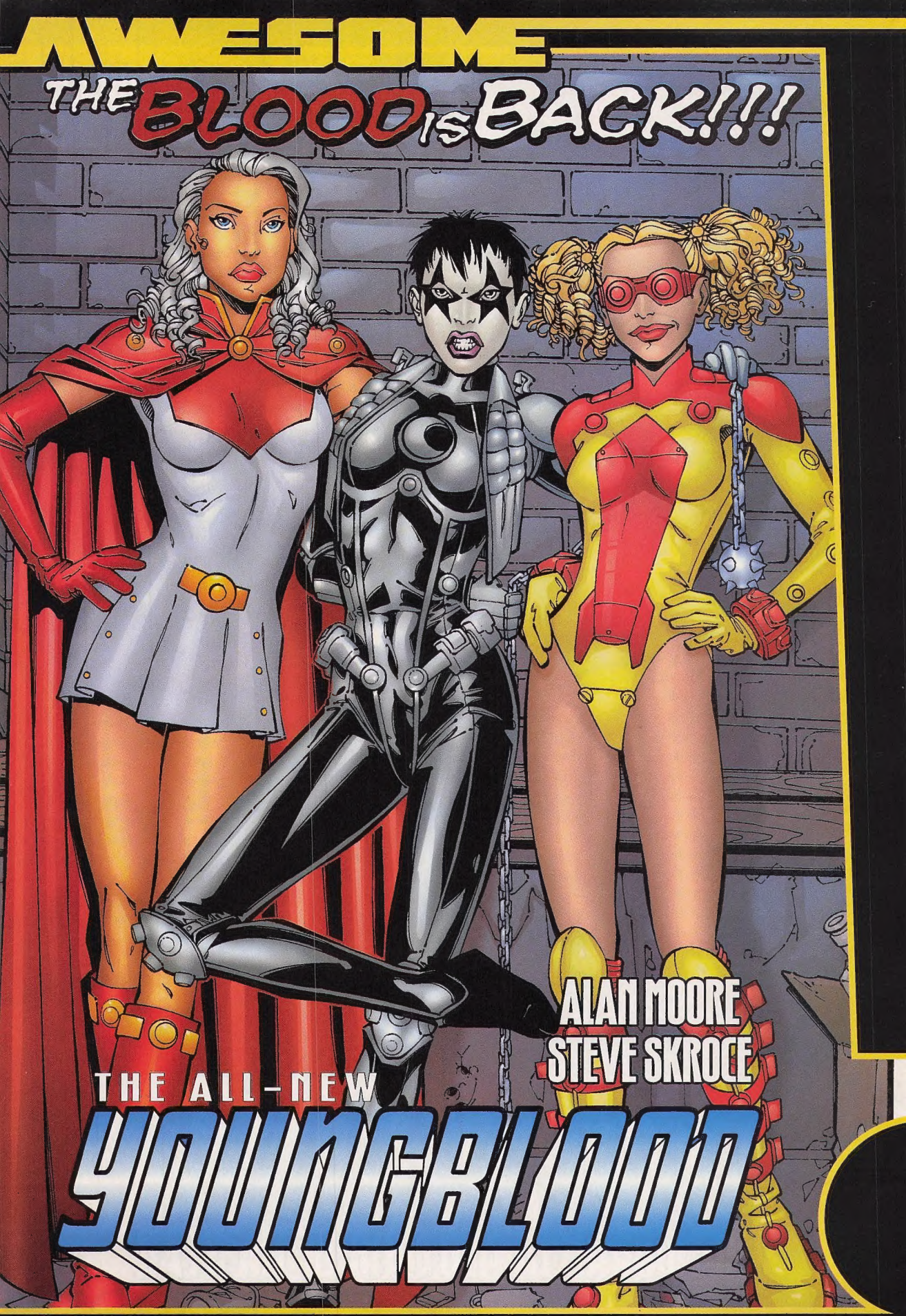

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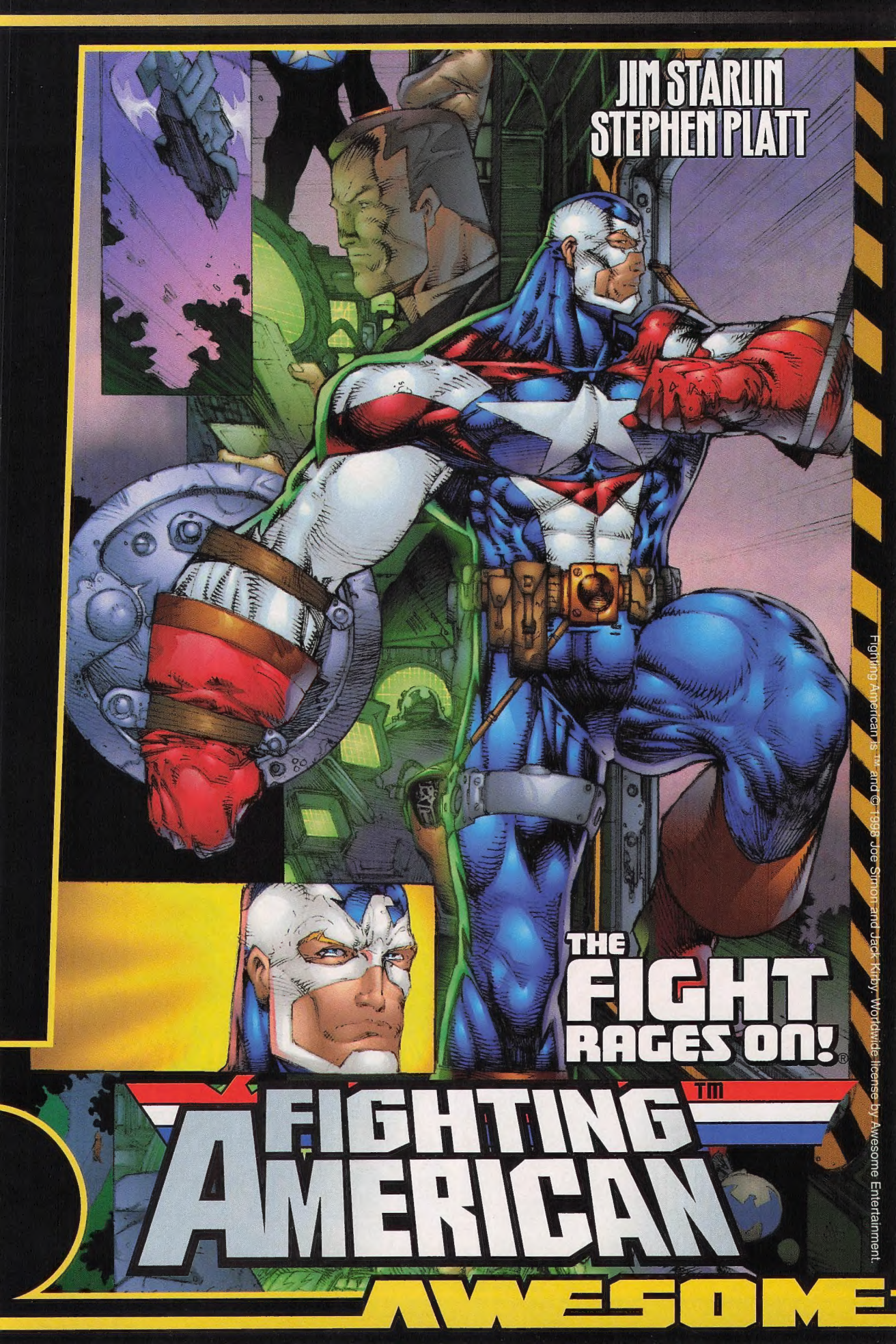
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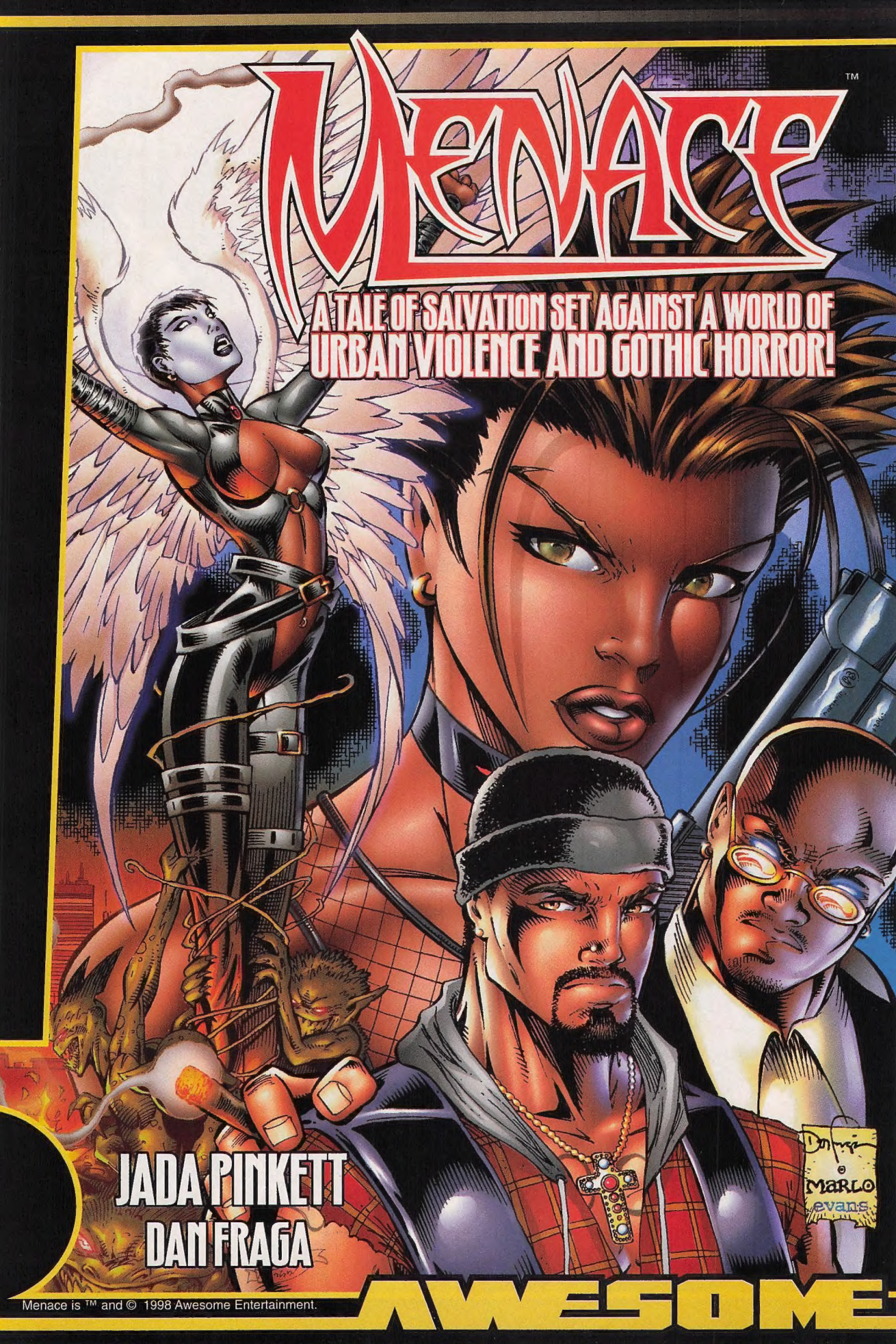

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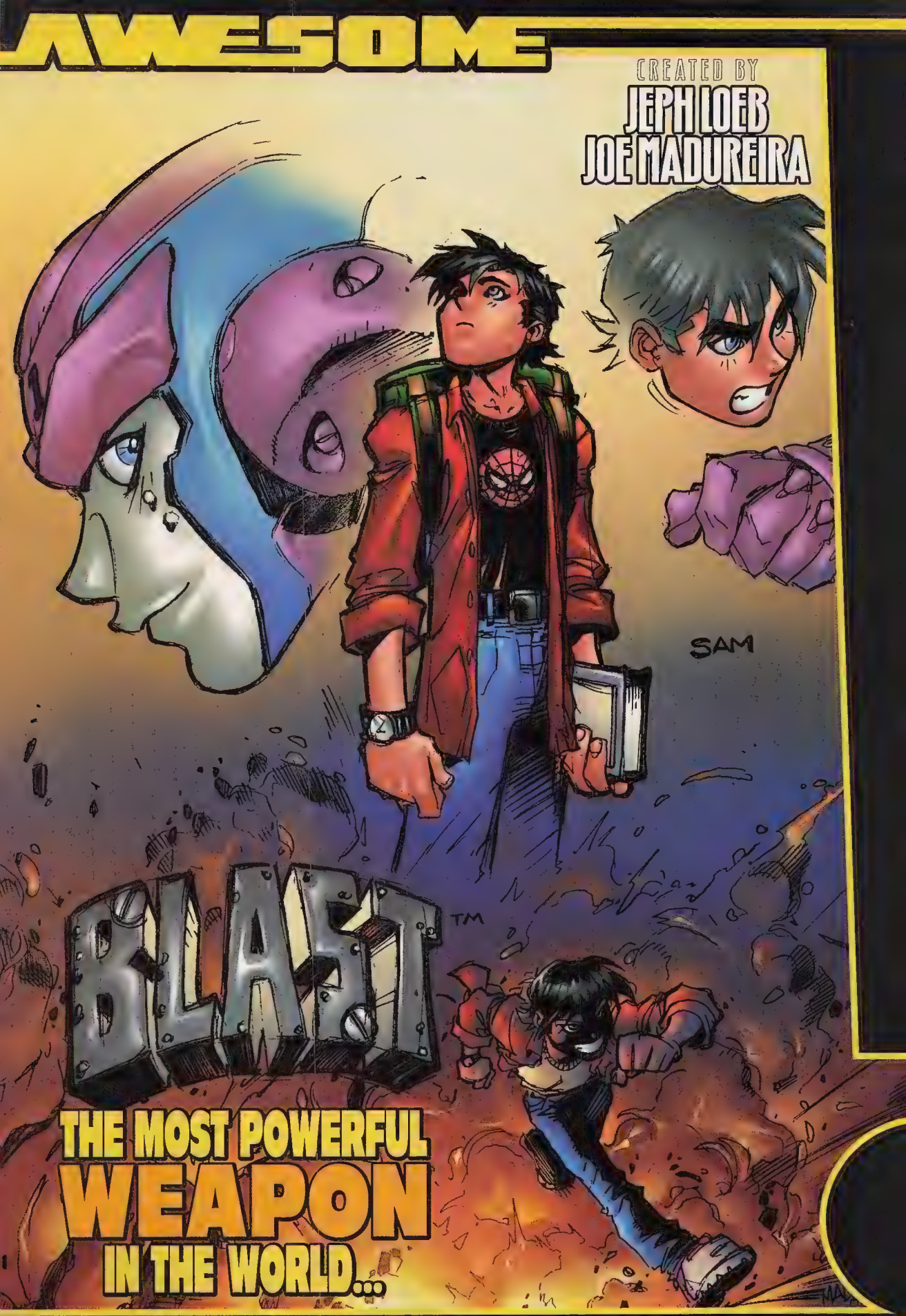

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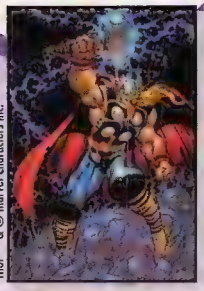

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ON THE COVER
Thor was illustrated by John Romita Jr. and Mark Farmer, and colored by Liquid Graphics. To learn all about the Thunder God's new title, check out page 50.

Wolverine and Hulk ™ & © Marvel Characters Inc.

Wolverine/Hulk was illustrated by Leinil Francis Yu and colored by Liquid Graphics. Claw your way to page 56 to see where these two rank our Top 10 barroom brawlers list.

South Park ™ & © Comedy Central

Cartman from the hit cartoon "South Park" was provided courtesy of Comedy Central. To learn the poop on this outrageous new TV series, squirm to page 134.

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EXCLUSIVE

Sweet Lord! Here's your *only* chance to get the exclusive *Divine Right* #1/2 comic, featuring everyone's favorite Net-surfin' teenager Max Faraday in a story by the man himself, Jim Lee. Manifest yourself to page 80 for details.

"PILE ON GAREB!"

MARVELING OVER MARVEL

I'm laughing to myself right now. You would think that I would know what's going to happen at Marvel. But I've been wrong every time. So I'm going to stop making predictions. Almost everyone I meet asks, "So, how's Marvel doin? What's gonna happen over there?" So I would answer what I thought, but BAM! I was wrong every time. So here I'm just going to tell you the most likely scenarios of what could happen. But I'm not suggesting what will happen because ultimately, I will be wrong again.

Right now, there's a trustee (a former judge) who has been appointed by the bankruptcy court to sort through all of the legal matters and analyze the reorganization plans. Believe it or not, Marvel is the healthiest it's been in a while. The red ink that's been bleeding the company has stopped flowing and Marvel is on its way to profitability.

Three things can happen. The first, and worst, is a liquidation of Marvel's assets—they break up the company or sell it whole to the highest bidder to pay off the creditors (in this case, the banks). This is highly unlikely due to the fact that there are parties already interested in reorganizing the company.

The second is that a company will win the right to reorganize—so Carl Icahn (the largest shareholder) can come in and run the company. Toy Biz has a plan to combine Marvel and Toy Biz and run the whole company. A movie studio or toy company can come in and outbid everyone. So there are numbers of companies that can come in and bail out the creditors.

The third option is to just run the company while it's in bankruptcy with the trustee overseeing all of the big decisions until the company is healthy enough to work out a repayment plan with the banks.

All three are possible. Number two is likely, but then again, who am I to say?

The one thing I have figured out is that, ultimately, when the lawyers and accountants can't make any more money off of Marvel, then a deal will be reached.

This month in *Wizard*, we have lots of great stuff including a Q&A with movie director/comic fanboy Kevin Smith, a look at Dan Jurgens and John Romita Jr.'s upcoming *Thor* series and a neat feature on comic book college courses. And you'll love our Superman Scrapbook which helps celebrate the Man of Steel's 60th anniversary.

Oh yeah. There's also a *Divine Right* #1/2 offer and a bunch of great "South Park" stickers. I'm sure you'll love them.

See ya,

Gareb S. Shamus

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Stuff you don't ever read...

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ALONE AGAINST THE N'GARAI

WHO WILL SURVIVE?

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AOL TIME WARNER

MARVEL

MAGIC WORDS

BLOOD, SWEAT...AND TODD?

Okay, so it's an odd grouping. But it accurately describes the stuff in *Wizard* #77, our funky-fresh, internationally known year-end issue for 1997. In this ish, we cranked up the volume from our usual 200 pages to a whoppin' 264! We did monster year-in-review and next-year-in-preview features! *And* we included a great sheet of nine comic character holiday gift tags and the exclusive, never-before-seen, mind-blowing *Earth X* comic by Alex Ross!

So which of these drool-inducing fanboy favorites has generated the most mail? Would you believe...none of the above?

After running on heavy, heavy fuel for the whole month, putting in caffeine-crazed long hours and pouring blood, sweat and tears into *Wizard* #77, center stage was grabbed by a simple letter written by Spawn creator Todd McFarlane. In this letter, the Toddler asked why people read comics, and how we can get more people reading. As per my promise, I've been forwarding those letters to McFarlane so we can all hopefully learn a thing or two.

But it makes a body wonder. All that bizarre and disparate effort, and the siren call of Todd McFarlane Himself is still the biggest thing in the issue? Ya'd better watch out, or we just might change our tag to *Wizard: The Todd Magazine*. Then won't you be sorry.

Okay, so maybe people also told us that *Earth X* rocked beyond belief. And there were a *few* other letters. Hey, look! Here come a few right now...

Dear Wizard,

I've been reading comics for about 25 years and have amassed a huge collection of basically every type of comic with the exception of offensively fascist titles such as *Sugar and Spike* or *Prez*. In that time, I've seen a lot of troubles hit this business. In response, I've compiled a short list of basic cure-alls for our beloved industry:

1) Don't spread it too thin! Every single title that I've ever looked forward to buying has been just that: a single title. It's hard to eagerly await any single Spider-Man tale when you can see him five or 10 times a month.

2) Stop big crossover events! *Genesis. Final Night.* "Zzzzzzzzzzzero Tolerance." Doctor, bring me a bottle of No-Doz!

3) Stick to basics in costumes! The best heroes have names that are instantly recognizable by a few defining costume characteristics. But I couldn't recognize the new "I've-got-a-knife" Dr. Fate guy if you put him in a line-up with Alf, Hillary Clinton and a Snapple machine.

4) Acknowledge the past, for it is good! Find out what made your title (or a similar title) a success, and use that formula. *JLA. Avengers. Astro City.* 'Nuff said.

5) If it ain't broke, don't fix it! I'm so tired of reading this interview:

Wizard: "So, Mr. New Writer Guy, now that you're writing this title, what are your plans?"

New guy: "Well, the first thing I'm going to do is shake up the status quo!" Aaaarrrggghhhh!

That's my rant. Hope you enjoy.

V. Weygandt
York, SC
vweygandt@worldnet.att.net

Nice rant. I did enjoy. A few comments:

1) Agreed. Our friends at Marvel Comics used to have an interesting character called the Punisher. He was cool as hell when he popped up two or three times a year in random issues of Amazing Spider-Man or Daredevil. Personally, I looked forward to those appearances, although I never thought he could support an ongoing series of his own.

So what happened? He got an ongoing series of his own. Then he got two more. Eventually, all those Punisher series got canceled because Punny lost the quality that made him special: the fact that he was a fringe player who could inspire terror in characters and excitement in readers on the few

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occasions he popped up. He got spread thin, he got dead-boring and readers went away.

Saturation can kill. We can only hope our friends at Marvel Comics trim back the Spider-Man line a bit before too many Spidey readers go away.

2) Agreed, although my problem with mega-crossovers isn't boredom, it's the resulting confusion.

3) Agreed. Marvel's Cyclops looks like a cyclops. Iron Man? He looks like an iron man. That's cool. Granted, most of the "good names" are taken today, but that isn't an excuse to come up with lame-o designs or lame-o names. Creating good names can still be done. Case in point: David Mack's Kabuki looks like a kabuki.

4) 'Nuff said? I have no idea what you're talking about in this point.

5) Agreed. If things need a shake-up, by all means you should shake. But if they're going good, hey—stay the course. Change simply for the sake of change is rarely a good idea. There must be a reason behind it to work.

THE BUNNY AWARD

be afraid

Paul Schiraldi

Jim takes one of his favorite letters of the month and spotlights it here. There's no logic attached to this, nor is there a prize.

Dear Wizard,

If *Spawn* creator Todd McFarlane was asked to return to Spider-Man in a "Heroes Reborn" kind of deal where he could make all the creative decisions and make lots of money, would he do it?

Sean Moore
Inverness, FL

Albert Ortega

Hmmm. Good question. We asked Mr. McFarlane (right) himself, who says, "No. Marvel on the whole is something in my past. I think of Spider-Man like I think of high school. I went there and I had a good time, but I've moved beyond it. I don't go to high school reunions, either."

All Hail the Bunny,

Since Jeph Loeb is now the publisher at Awesome Entertainment, does this mean he will not write for other companies like Marvel or DC? Does this mean we will never see another story like *Batman: The Long Halloween*?

J.J. Mack
Creve Coeur, MO

Loeb (below)—who still has a bad haircut—will be the doing the bulk of his writing at Awesome, where his skills can be seen monthly on books like* The Coven *and* Kaboom. *You'll also see Loeb pair with his old* Long Halloween *partner, artist Tim Sale, on this summer's* Superman: For All Seasons *four-issue mini-series from DC. Says Loeb, "I work at Awesome, but I still love comics in general. So I say damn the torpedoes and full speed ahead! I'll do a Superman story if I want to."

Paul Schiraldi

Hey, Jim,

I have questions.

1) Whatever became of the second *Hellshock* series? I loved it, but it vanished and I haven't seen it in ages. What gives? It was a great book.

2) Any chance the upcoming "Superman" movie won't suck?

3) Who is the most interesting female character: Lois Lane, Darkchylde, Dawn or Fairchild?

4) You condone violence. If I were to beat someone up, could I blame you?

J.L. Byers
Burbank, CA

I have answers.

1) I rather like* Hellshock *myself. It's a great book...when it comes out.* Hellshock *#1 and #2 came out in February and March of 1997, but it took until February 1998 for #3. Series writer/artist Jae Lee said that he's rewriting the entire story of Hellshock and he swears up and down it's now on a monthly schedule. Here's hopin'.

2) Nope.

3) Depends on what you're looking for. Lois Lane is very interesting as a supporting character. Darkchylde is very interesting if you're into teen angst in a lead character. Dawn is very interesting as a kind of "force of nature" character who stands apart from humanity. And Fairchild is interesting because...uh...because she...aw, hell. I'll read* Gen[13] *#26 and pray Fairchild turns into a character worth reading.

4) No. Whereas I may occasionally endorse smacking a select few—like the stinking petit bourgeois golf-playing Man—as the last of last resorts, I endorse personal responsibility above all else. We are all ultimately responsible for our own actions and should stand ready to deal with the consequences of them. I never blame someone else for my actions. Neither should you.

Hello,

Does DC Comics realize that the excessive amount of JLA-related books will once again kill the JLA? The last JLA series was fresh and exciting until the release of *Justice League International*, *Justice League Europe*, a *Justice League Antarctica* one-shot and so on. I realize DC sees JLA-labeling as an opportunity to make additional profits, but if the core *JLA* itself goes flat, they may lose their cash cow entirely.

Tab Tillman
BBrown5058@aol.com

Maybe. See the first point in our first letter this month and see next month's

Wizard for a feature examining this very phenomenon.

Dear Wizard,
What issue contained the very first comic book story Stan Lee wrote? How much is it worth?

Brian Corvello
Sparkill, NY

Captain America Comics #3, published way back in May 1941, was Stan's first published work. Interestingly enough, Stan's first comic story wasn't in traditional comic book form. It was a prose story—all words and no pictures—that ran in the back pages. If you have $7,000 lying around, you could buy either 2,602 pounds of Cheez-Its at $2.69 a pound or a top-shape copy of Cap #3. Personally, I'd go with the Cheez-Its.

Dear Wizard Goons,
Hi. I'm 15 years old and I would say I'm a pretty talented artist. In a couple of years, I'll be graduating from high school and I know I want to get into the comic field.

How do I get my foot in the door? What classes should I take in high school and what colleges offer courses that could help me become a better comic artist? And finally, what do publishers look for when they look for new artists?

Nick Burgdorf
Boise, ID

Good questions. For answers, we turn to a scholastic kind of guy in Jim Balent, DC Comics' Catwoman artist and a man who's played teacher by hosting no less than three of our "Basic Training" columns. Quoth Mr. Balent: "The two courses to focus on in high school are anatomy and any kind of storytelling class. In comics, you need basic anatomy to structure your characters, and you need storytelling ability to move

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characters from panel to panel.

"When searching for artists, publishers primarily look for what kind of person you are. They want professionalism and the ability to meet deadlines. They want people who can get along well with others, 'cause creating comics is a team sport."

Photo courtesy of Jim Balent

If there's one thing Balent (above) knows, it's meeting deadlines. As I write this, he's done (Get this!) 57 consecutive issues of Catwoman without missing a single one.

And as for college? Check out page 67 of this very issue of Wizard for a feature on comic book colleges and courses. Now how's that for quick service?

Dear Wizard,

I just bought the Eidos *Fighting Force* video game for my Sony PlayStation. In the credits, I saw Marc Silvestri and Top Cow Productions credited with "additional character designs." Which characters did they design? Is there going to be a Top Cow comic based on this game? Or is Eidos going to produce a video game based on any Top Cow characters?

Eri Lamuel Gaudiamo
Rawamansun, Indonesia

Silvestri and his cattle actually worked on all the main characters in the game after Eidos turned to Top Cow to tweak and jazz up its original designs. There is no Fighting Force comic in the works, but if one ever comes, it'll probably carry the brand of the Top Cow ranch. After all, Eidos is already grazing in the Top Cow pasture with its crossover Tomb Raider/Witchblade comic.

Hot damn, but I love the fact that there's a comic publisher called "Top Cow"—it lends itself to all kinds of bad puns.

Dear Wizard,

About your "Top 10 Comics" section in *Wizard* #76 and your references to Witchblade and Brazil:

It's true that Witchblade is "Witchblade" here in Brazil, and she is number one with us. But I'm sorry—we don't speak Spanish here. We speak Portuguese. And Portuguese is as close to Spanish as English is to German. Therefore, writer Christina Z. ("*la chica* Zee," you called her) would be "*a garota Zê*" in Portuguese. And writer David Wohl ("*El escribador pequeño*"? Geeeezz...) is "*o pequeño roteirista.*"

But you are correct in one regard: Inker "D-Tron" is "D-Tron" in any language.

Cristian Lapa
Brasilia, Brazil
nique@brnet.com.br

We stand corrected. All apologies to our Portuguese-fluent readers. Does this mean I'm not invited to the next carnival in Rio?

Photo courtesy of Christina Z.

Dear Wizard,

Hey! Is John McCrea, the guy who illustrates *Hitman*, the same John McCrea who is the singer for the band Cake?

Chris Karigan
Huntsville, AL

Hey! No! Same name, but they're different guys entirely. The comic-drawin' McCrea says that while he's a big music fan, he's not exactly musically inclined, so he'll stick to drawing funnybooks.

Dear Sir,

Adamantium is a metal, right? So how do they mine it? If it's unbreakable, then you can't cut it. So how can they make it into things like Wolverine's claws?

Eric White
Huntsville, AL

Two Huntsvillians in a row? What're the odds of that? You guys must be cousins.

Adamantium—the wonderful fake metal that only exists in the Marvel Universe—is never mined, since it doesn't occur in nature. It's a chemical compound developed by Dr. Myron MacLain. Even though it's unbreakable, you can fashion adamantium into damn near anything, 'cause it's stored as two separate resins labeled "X" and "Y." Pour both resins in the proper ratio into a mold for say, razor-sharp claws, wait for the resins to harden into a solid and bingo—instant pigstickers.

Dear Jim,

I have a couple of questions for you:

1) Who drew the fake *Wizard* cover of Bluntman and Chronic in the movie "Chasing Amy"?

2) How many weasels do you think could fit down Rush Limbaugh's pants?

3) Who do you think would win in a fight between Thanos and Darkseid?

4) My idiot friend thinks that Sam and Max could beat up Milk and Cheese. Hey, I love Sam and Max as much as the next guy, but there's no way Sam and Max could beat the invincible Milk and Cheese! What do you think?

Adrian Langston
Decatur, GA

Actually, a "couple" implies "two." You have four questions. So I'd say you have a "few" questions. Anyhoo...

1) The cover, like all the "Bluntman and Chronic" art in the movie, was drawn by Madman artist Mike Allred. Our very own designer Arlene So put the cover elements on to make it look like a real Wizard cover.

2) Isn't Rush Limbaugh already a weasel?

3) Darkseid.

4) I think your friend is indeed an idiot, and you are right. Sam and Max are merely playfully silly characters, while Milk and Cheese are 32 ounces of pure, unadulterated violence wrapped up in USDA-approved packaging. Milk and Cheese mop the floor with Sam and Max

PENPALS

Robin Jeffries
Age: 20 Sex: Male
P.O. Box 727
Lebanon, KY 40033
Likes: *Darkchylde, Green Lantern, Legion of Super-Heroes*

Steve Womack
Age: 13 Sex: Male
P.O. Box 475
Williamsville, IL 62693
Likes: all Image/Top Cow titles, *Star Wars*, most Marvel titles

Greg Brandenburger
Age: 17 Sex: Male
P.O. Box 951
Golden, CO 80402
Likes: *The Tick*, all Spider-titles, *Shi*

Kris Kerr, 13/m
quickeboy@juno.com
Darkness, Gen13, Star Wars

Ilke Altin, 19/m
oaltin@ares.ku.edu.tr
X-Men, Wolverine, Spider-Man

Cliff Williams, 19/m
williamc@peleliu.navy.mil
X-titles, *Thunderbolts, JLA*

Kaina Pereira, 17/m
grand_moff@juno.com
all Spawn titles, all Bat-titles

Dave DeSandro, 14/m
Zayo@juno.com
Spawn, anything by Adam Warren

Fabrõzio Dias Lima, 22/m
orin@libnet.com.br
X-titles, *Aquaman, Spawn*

Jason Hartsfield, 15/m
jasharts@Juno.com
X-titles, *Wolverine*, new Superman

Jason Chuang, 19/m
chuanjb@mail.auburn.edu
X-titles, *Sovereign Seven, Spawn*

ALL HELL'S BREAKING LOOSE...

POLTERGEIST REPORT

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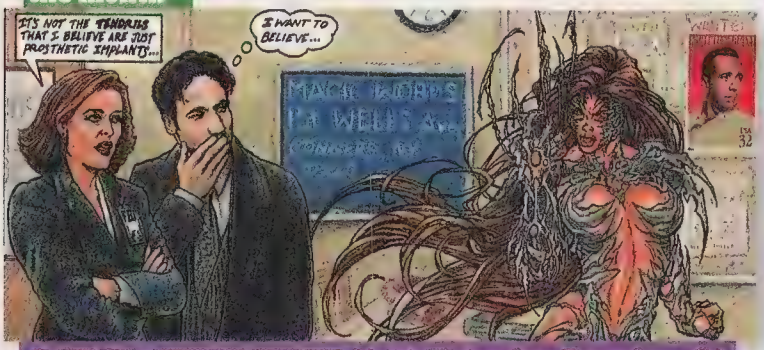
LETTER ART

Fans who have their letter art printed this month will each receive two *Kabuki* comics autographed by creator David Mack, plus a copy of this issue of *Wizard* signed by the entire *Wizard* creative staff! The creator of the best envelope wins a signed Kabuki sketch by Mack, plus the signed comics and signed *Wizard* issue! (Thanks very much for the loot, David!) Artists: Please include a clearly printed return address and **a list of characters depicted** on the **back** of your envelope. Good luck!

THE PRIZE

envelope of the month



X-FILES "WITCH HUNT" Keith Weier San Francisco, CA

WHEN UNIVERSES COLLIDE Simon Adams Auckland, New Zealand

CARTMAN/SAVAGE DRAGON FLEX-OFF Chad Clark Jersey City, NJ

ONSLAUGHT'S SURPRISE Mike Cole Sidney, IL

we're in the home stretch...

any day of the week.

Dear Jim,
In which comic did the Chaos! Comics character "Jade" first appear?

Bobby Rivera
Gilroy, CA

That batty Chinese vampire first appeared in Purgatori: Prelude *#-1, published back in April 1996.*

Hey Jim,
What the hell is sponge made out of?

Yim Onn Siong
osyim@tm.net.my

Sponge.

Dear Jim,
I thought milk and cow were coming back? Well, are they?

Josh Colburn
Beacon Falls, CT

As near as I can tell, milk keeps coming back every week. I mean, every time I go to the grocery store, there's more there. But we're all still waiting for the cows to come home.

Think I'll wait for the cows to come home while I'm at home. Until next month, I remain...

—Jim McLauchlin

Jim McLauchlin wants to go home with the armadillo.

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Wizards OF THE COAST

King of Revamps

John Byrne set to retell early Spidey adventures, redesign classic villains

Big changes are in store for everybody's favorite web-spinner and the man jump-starting these changes has a bit of experience in that arena: writer/artist **John Byrne**.

"What we're looking for is a restatement of who and what **Spider-Man** is," said Marvel Comics' Spider-Man Group Editor **Ralph Macchio**. "And doing that through the eyes of John Byrne is about as good a way as I can imagine."

Spider-Man: Year One?

Byrne will get his chance to leave his stamp on Spidey in a 13-issue mini-series debuting in October. The series, which has no official title yet, will launch with two bi-weekly issues and continue monthly thereafter. Byrne has expertise in defining characters, having done a major revamp in the past on DC Comics' **Superman** and praised for revitalizing Marvel's ***Uncanny X-Men*** (with Chris Claremont) and ***Fantastic Four***. But Macchio said Byrne will apply a lighter touch here. "We're not going to rewrite history, so don't pull your hair out," he cautioned. Instead, Byrne will essentially do a "Spider-Man: Year One" kind of take, retelling early Spidey adventures with an eye toward, in Byrne's words, "opening the book to new readers and making it accessible, without offending too many older readers. What we're saying is, 'Here's a place to jump on and learn about his beginning.'"

Part of this beginning is bringing something new along with something old. "They want me to redesign some of the characters," said Byrne, "mostly to update the look of some of the villains without losing that special, quirky, funky [original Spider-Man artist Steve] Ditko quality." Macchio said that some technology-based Spidey foes like **Dr. Octopus** and **Electro** will be "updated to bring them more in line with today." In addition, Macchio said Byrne will be "establishing connections between what happens in his book and what we're going to be doing in current continuity. John is a very astute reader and he's found several places where we can show unrevealed connections. We're going to plant some stuff that will bear fruit in the future. It's not just history we're doing here."

Byrne (opposite) will update Spidey and his villains for the '90s, but won't rewrite history.

After the Byrne

Byrne's series debuts in October, a month where no other Spidey books will ship. The events of the four

Photo: Matthew J. Atanian

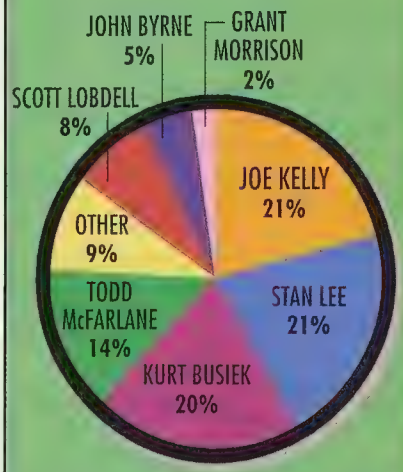
monthly Spider-books come to a head in September and, said Macchio, "whatever it is we're leading up to—and I don't know yet if it's upbeat or downbeat—ends." When regular Spider-books reappear in November, the rumors will prove true—the line will be cut in half. "Two things I've figured," said Macchio, "are that too many Spidey titles do long-term damage to the character and that one single writer is the way to go." Macchio confirms that only two monthly books will remain in current continuity. "And they're basically one bi-weekly book, because the same guy will be writing." Macchio has not made a determination on the writer yet and refused to offer a short list, but he has confirmed that ***Amazing Spider-Man*** and ***Peter Parker: Spider-Man*** will be the titles left standing. **John Romita Jr.** will continue to pencil *Peter Parker*, and an artist yet to be determined will handle *Amazing*.

"One writer and one voice speaking for Spider-Man is a major and important step to take," Macchio said. "We can move forward in a strong way and with one writer, we can take care of things in a quick way if we need to make changes. With a single voice, we can get to the essence of the character and give the book the thrust we want."

That thrust will start in the Byrne series. "If John's work does become a template for the new Spidey, it will be in the sense that he's provided us with a new point to begin with," said Macchio. "And when things restart in November, it will be with a new status quo. The month off will represent a year in which he's been gone as a character. Things will be different, and I think we may very well pay attention to what Byrne said about Spidey as a character. It's now up to us to determine what the new status quo will be." ■ *Jim McLauchlin and Craig Shutt*

READER POLL

WHO SHOULD REVITALIZE SPIDER-MAN?



Via an America Online poll: here's what fans had to say about why these creators should or shouldn't reboot the Web-slinger:

Kurt Busiek: "His *Untold Tales of Spider-Man* was incredible, but no one cared about that book enough to buy it. And he's already locked into too many titles."

John Byrne: "He's done it before with Superman. Still, that was a long time ago and I don't know if he still has it in him because *Wonder Woman* hasn't been so great."

Joe Kelly: "He's still proving himself and a reboot needs someone who can handle the pressure of it. But he'd probably need to leave *X-Men*. And who would want to do that?"

Stan Lee: "Why not bring the man who created Spider-Man back to reboot him? I guess he's too old and busy to do such a big project. I mean, he hasn't written something steady since...wow, a long time ago."

Scott Lobdell: "That *Uncanny X-Men* #346 story he did had the perfect Spidey. And 'Age of Apocalypse' shows he can jump-start something."

Todd McFarlane: "He was the best on *Spider-Man*, hands down! But c'mon, let's be realistic. He'd never leave *Spawn* and go back to Marvel. Everyone knows that. His Spidey time is done."

Grant Morrison: "No doubt he's a great writer. But he doesn't do superheroes often. He ain't mainstream enough." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

Grand Admiral Maurice recently lamented the Empire's recent downsizing. "I've lost me privates!" commented the Admiral, who was then shot.

World's tallest child revealed to be an amazing 8'3" giant; "This Batman is freakin' huge!" exclaimed the abnormal infant before being sedated and fed to the homeless.

New Magic: The Gathering commercial apparently causes problems for the three women who play Magic: "They said all you need is a deck and a friend, you moron! A DECK!"

ahead

PACHECO LEAVES *X-MEN*!

HAL JORDAN RETURNS!

AND MONKEYS IN EGYPT!

Pacheco Leaves X-Men to Assemble With Avengers

Marvel Comics has announced that a top artist has left a top post. February's ***X-Men* #74** is the last issue for penciler **Carlos Pacheco**, the man who has handled the book since #62. Newcomer **German Garcia** will fill in for a few issues as Marvel searches for a new regular artist. For Pacheco, who moves on to various Avengers projects, the move is one of personal satisfaction.

"I spent a year on *X-Men*, a decent period of time," he said. "But the stories that touched my heart as a young man were *Avengers* by Roy Thomas, Steve Englehart and Jim Starlin. *Avengers* has always been my goal."

Pacheco starts on Earth's Mightiest Heroes by penciling the ***Avengers and Squadron Supreme*** annual in June, continuing the **Squadron Supreme** story started in *Avengers* #5-#6. From there, things get big.

Pacheco pencils ***Avengers: World in Chains***, a 12-issue limited series debuting in late summer written by regular *Avengers* writer **Kurt Busiek**. While plot details are still sketchy, Pacheco promises an "epic tone that the series has had in the past, with the Avengers visiting other world and other realities."

Pacheco is not worried about any loss of status in leaving Marvel's premier franchise. "I've always considered myself just an artist," he said. "I never wanted to be 'hot' or reach a certain level. I just want to keep the traditions of the comics I love, and this is how I'm doing it."

Who will step into Pacheco's X-shoes? At press time, former *Uncanny X-Men* penciler **Brandon Peterson** (*Arcanum*) is his tentative successor on *X-Men*.

"We just need someone good," said Marvel Editor-in-Chief **Bob Harras**. "*X-Men* is too important not to have a top talent on it." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

Photo courtesy of Carlos Pacheco

No more *X-Men* for Pacheco.

Superman's Cape Sells for $17,000

Somebody is wearing Superman's cape, but it's *not* the Man of Steel.

The **Superman** cape worn by actor **Christopher Reeve** in the 1978 "Superman" movie was purchased at a Sotheby's auction on December 20, 1997 by Stefan Hallin, a 28-year-old Superman lover. He paid $17,000 for the movie collectible.

After hearing about the auction on TV in his hotel room the very morning of December 20th, Hallin zipped over to Sotheby's and satisfied his geekdom. Not only did Hallin buy the Superman cape, but also the maroon Star Fleet uniform **William Shatner** wore in the 1982 **"Star Trek II: Wrath of Khan"** movie for an additional $11,000.

So what does one do with a Superman cape? Wear it to dinner parties? Try to save the world? Hallin simply joked that he's thinking of using it as "a robe in the morning." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

How much would you pay for Superman's cape?

Photo: © Sotheby's

BUZZ BOX

The inside scoop on the comic industry

• **Madureira Blasts Awesome!** While Joe Madureira is hard at work on *Battle Chasers* over at Cliffhanger Comics, a new property he developed with Awesome Publisher Jeph Loeb should see light by the end of 1998. Look for *Blast*, as penciled by Ed McGuinness (*Deadpool*) coming from Awesome.

• **Batman vs. Darkness!** DC Comics and Top Cow Productions are in the earliest stages of discussions about a Batman/The Darkness crossover project! If it happens, *Darkness* creator and artist Marc Silvestri is champin' at the bit to do the art!

• **'Cap'-tive Artists!** Word has it that Andy Kubert will draw the regular *Captain America* title and not the spinoff *Captain America: Sentinel of Liberty*, as originally announced. The rumor positions current *Cap* penciler Ron Garney as the artist on the second series.

• **Writers Feelin' Green!** Marvel's second Hulk title (as previewed in "Wizard News," #78) has been pushed back a month or two as Marvel tries to line up the right writer. Rumored to have the inside track? Warren Ellis (*StormWatch*, *Transmetropolitan*) or Ted McKeever (*Industrial Gothic*).

• **Gaiman Goes Mad!** Buzz is that drop-dead serious *Sandman* writer Neil Gaiman will be teaming up with legendary *Mad* and *Groo* artist Sergio Aragonés on a DC/Vertigo *House of Mystery* project.

• **New Comic Company!** Rumor has it that Image Comics founder Whilce Portacio (*Wetworks*) is teaming up with Brian Haberlin (Witchblade co-creator and the colorist behind *Spawn*) to start a new line of comics sometime in late 1998.

• **Invisible X-Men!** Vertigo's *Invisibles* penciler, Phil Jimenez, is part of a proposal for a late-1998 X-Men mini-series featuring Nightcrawler, Colossus and Wolverine. The series is being talked about in Marvel's halls, but isn't on the schedule yet.

D'OH!

The inker of that snazzy "Cliffhanger" cover of *Wizard* #78 was, um, not correctly identified. *Danger Girl* inker Alex Garner did the job. Also, in that issue, the photo of Ben Raab in "Creator Spotlight" was not credited correctly. The photo was taken by Tracey Vogt. Our apologies to all parties involved.

Generation X Goes Underground

Mainstream and alternative comics bang heads in March when Marvel Comics releases the ***Generation X: Underground*** one-shot.

The black-and-white project came about as a result of discussions between Generation X creator **Scott Lobdell** and small-press cartoonist **Jim Mahfood**, whose previous credits include the "Clerks" movie adaptation for Oni Press and the self-published *Cosmic Toast*.

"Scott saw his stuff and thought it would be cool to do mainstream X-characters in a weird, funky, underground annual," recalled Jason Liebig, editor of the book. Lobdell then showed Mahfood's work to Liebig, who was impressed.

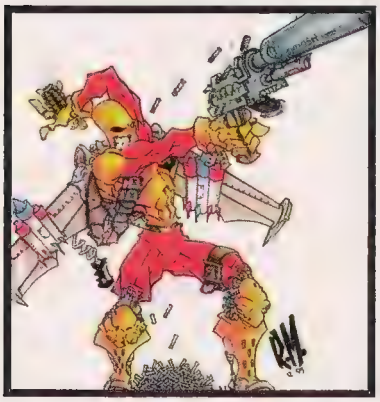
The book, written and drawn by Mahfood, is made up of funky short stories—including a take on the **Generation X** girls as karate-chopping 1970s-era TV detectives—and art that can be used to make your own "bootleg" items like trading cards and iron-ons. "It's more than just a comic," said Liebig. "There's a lot of fun stuff here." ■ *Dallas Middaugh*

'Savage Dragon' #50: Everybody Dies?

"I am self-indulgent enough where I will do anything I want just to make myself happy," said ***Savage Dragon*** writer/artist **Erik Larsen**. June provides Larsen with a self-indulgent occasion: *Savage Dragon* #50. And Larsen *will* indulge.

Savage Dragon #50 will tip the scales at a big, thick 100 pages. The main story will feature the culmination of a three-part storyline in which Dragon returns to Chicago to take care of the Vicious Circle gang once and for all. The remainder will include a reprint of *Savage Dragon* #1/2 (originally published by *Wizard*), a back-up story by Larsen and Vic Bridges, and pin-ups by the likes of **Todd McFarlane**, **Greg Capullo** and **Walt Simonson**.

And what about the persistent rumors that *everyone*—including Dragon himself—dies in this issue? "Well," Larsen said, "Dragon's *not* in #51. The She-Dragon's running the show there. So either Dragon's on vacation…or something else has happened." ■ *Dallas Middaugh*



A *Wizard* reader hits paydirt.

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AWESOME

'Wizard' Contest Winner Gets Penciling Gig

Think nobody ever wins those contests? **Reuben Martinez** did. Until he won.

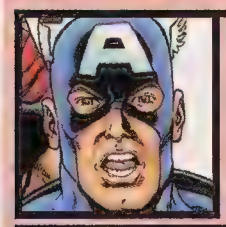
Fireman Press, home to ***Scud: The Disposable Assassin***, chose Martinez as the winner in *Wizard*'s 1996 "Draw Scud" contest. As his prize, Martinez got his one-page Scud pinup published in *Scud* #15. From there, Martinez moves on to regular, ongoing work. Martinez pencils Fireman Press' newest humor comic *Tales From the Vending Machine* #2, a March release. The 24-year-old graphic designer from Maywood, Calif., drew the original Scud piece as a Christmas gift for a friend. The friend actually sent it into *Wizard* as an entry on Martinez' behalf. "Months later, I got a package in the mail and was totally surprised and a little confused when it said that I had won," said Martinez.

"**Rob Schrab** [Scud creator] saw Reuben's McFarlane-esque, muscle-bound, imposing Scud and had faith in him," said Dan Harmon, Fireman Press editor. "I'm sure there'll be no shortage of projects for him here in the future." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

Avengers Assemble!

The old order changeth in March's ***Avengers #4*** as the "Heroes Return" Avengers get their first official lineup. While tight-lipped writer **Kurt Busiek** ain't spilling the beans on the exact lineup, he did provide speculation.

But Busiek adds that even though a lineup is settled in *Avengers* #4, "by the end of the summer, two Avengers leave—one willingly, one unwillingly. So even if you figure it all out, we'll keep you guessing."



Captain America

"He's a brilliant tactician and the heart of the Avengers' spirit. Plus he's one of the Avengers' 'Big Three.'"
Odds: Even. Cap *is* the Avengers.

Iron Man

"'Big Three,' part two. He's the Avengers' financial backer, so even if he's not on the team he's in the book."
Odds: Even. Iron Man is an Avengers fixture.

Thor

"He completes the 'Big Three.' But there is that oft-remembered storyline where Thor thought he was too powerful for the Avengers and thought he was slumming by hanging out with them. Then again, [*Avengers* artist] George Pérez draws a great Thor."
Odds: Even. Thor completes the triad.

Giant-Man

"He has enormous history with the team. He's been married, divorced, gone crazy, you name it. Most things in his life draw him away from being a superhero and into being a scientist."
Odds: 3-1. Hank needs a home and we think *Avengers* is it.

Wasp

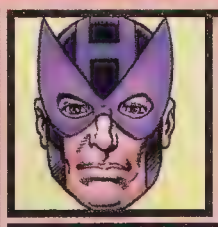
"She's Hank's opposite because she likes being in the spotlight and likes being a superhero."
Odds: 3-1. If Hank's in, his ex-wife the Wasp is in. They play off each other very well.

Vision

"If there's anyone who's defined by the Avengers, it is the Vision. He contributes to a good character mix because he's so distinct and singular."
Odds: 3-1. The Vision was born in *Avengers* and we think there's a good chance he makes the cut.

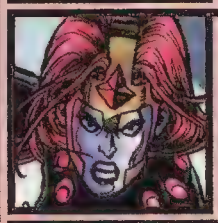
Scarlet Witch

"George designed a new costume for her, so that's good. But what are her powers? Hex spheres? Her powers are very inconsistent."
Odds: 3-1. A new Pérez-designed costume means she's in.



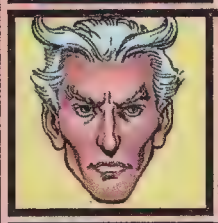
Hawkeye

"He's my favorite all-time Marvel character and that's the best thing he's got going for him! Then again, I write *Iron Man* too, and he's got Iron Man history, so I could just write him there."
Odds: 5-1. C'mon, he's a career Avenger.



Topaz

Marvel sez there'll be one new Avenger who ain't from the Marvel Universe—and Marvel owns the Ultraverse, where Topaz is from. Busiek pleads the fifth, but we're thinking this warrior princess (whom Pérez used to draw in *Ultraforce*) is a good bet.
Odds: 5-1.



Quicksilver

"He's a jerk! Readers haven't warmed to him like I have. I love him because he's a jerk and that's fun to write."
Odds: 10-1. Pietro might be too fringe for the Avengers.

Beast

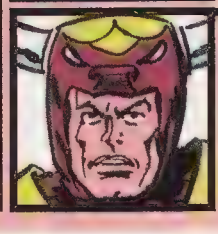
"I love the Beast in the Avengers! And I love him in the X-Men. I guarantee the Beast will show up. But will he stay?"
Odds: 20-1. Look for the Beast to hang around a bit in *Avengers*, but stay tied to Marvel's mutants.

Black Widow

"She recently said in *Thunderbolts* that she thinks she's a very good spy, but not a very good superhero. And the Avengers aren't a team of spies."
Odds: 40-1. The Widow's goin' back to the spy gig.

Wonder Man

"He's dead."
Odds: 50-1. He's been resurrected twice. Third time could be the charm.



Gilgamesh

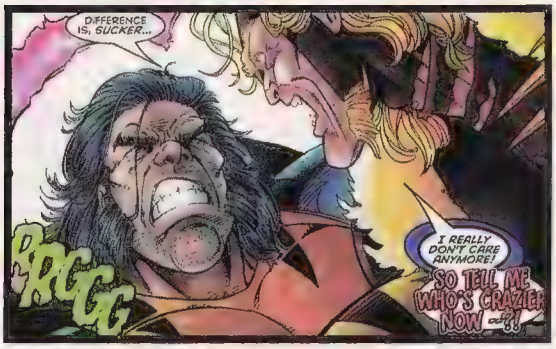
"You won't be seeing Gilgamesh. End the conversation."
Odds: 4,000-1. "The Forgotten One" is best left that way.

Sabretooth Invades Wolverine's Title

It's looking like old home week for everyone's favorite furry mutant as **Wolverine**, already joined by his former writer in **Chris Claremont**, is now visited by his oldest enemy: **Sabretooth**.

"The story that will become *Wolverine* #127-#130, I originally proposed as *Sabretooth* #1-#4," said Claremont of the story starting in June. "So yes, you could say Sabretooth plays a prominent part."

Also prominently featured will be a look into the shared past that Wolvie and 'Tooth have and a few always-coveted nuggets of their mysterious backgrounds. "History is integral to this story," Claremont said. "We will give more insight into who and what Wolverine and Sabretooth are. But I'd stop short of calling this a definitive origin. There's such a thing as too much information, especially with characters like Wolverine where a big part of his appeal is his mystery. But we will reveal new territory."



Wolverine and Sabretooth go all out this summer.

Most of that territory focuses on what Claremont calls "a battle for the heart and mind of the one who may be Wolverine's greatest true love—even more so than [former fiancée] Mariko." Claremont isn't naming the mystery woman yet, but assures that she is an existing character. "Hopefully, when she's revealed, readers will say, 'Okay. That makes sense.'" Claremont said that this character may later appear in ***Fantastic Four***, another book he writes, and hints that she may become Franklin Richards' nanny.

With romance and mystery as the background, one should not forget that taking center stage will be a classic, savage slugfest. "This will remind people why Sabretooth is one of the preeminent villains in the Marvel Universe," Claremont concluded. "He's the guy you *never* want to mess with." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

Widow of Comic Legend Jack Kirby Dies

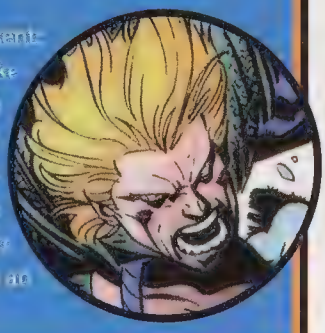
Rosalind (Roz) Kirby, 75, widow of comics legend **Jack Kirby**, died December 22, 1997 of natural causes. Mrs. Kirby was legendary herself for welcoming all fans who visited the couple's Los Angeles home, providing a Mecca for a number of future comics pros.

Her public profile grew in recent years as her contribution in art support and inking for some of Jack's projects became apparent, as seen in DC's recent *Secret Origins* reprint, where Mrs. Kirby received a co-art credit with her husband for the "Challengers of the Unknown" story.

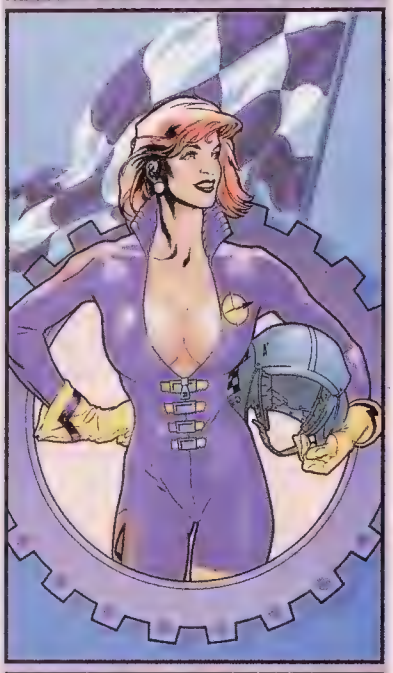
Comic writer **Marv Wolfman**, who knew the Kirbys since visiting as a fan, said, "Roz was Jack's light to his soul. But for a 13-year-old visiting the Kirby home for the first time, she was a caring host who kindly welcomed into her home a kid she didn't know and spoke to him as if he were not only an adult, but deserving to be spoken to." ■*Craig Shutt*

we LOOKED it up

Ka•zar (KAY-zar) proper noun, 1965-present: 1. Lord Kevin Plunder, Marvel's Tarzan-like adventurer and protector of the primitive Savage Land 2. literally, "son of the tiger" in the language of the Savage Land Man-Apes; derived from Ka-Zar's close relationship with the saber-toothed tiger Zabu 3. What you say when you agree with an imperial Russian leader: "Kay, Czar!"



SHE'S BACK AND BUILT TO LAST!



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Hal Jordan Returns! For a While...

Hal Jordan is back...but for how long?

Green Lantern writer **Ron Marz** has confirmed that the former (and still popular) Green Lantern Hal Jordan will return in April's *Green Lantern* #99. Jordan will remain all throughout a storyline lasting until issue #106. Beyond that, Hal's status is up in the air.

Ever since Hal's controversial turn to evil in 1994's *Green Lantern* (vol. 3) #48 and his death in 1996's *Final Night* #4, the debate has raged: Who's the better Lantern? Hal Jordan or new Green Lantern **Kyle Rayner**? But according to Marz, the present-day Hal Jordan is still dead and will stay that way. "The catch is that this is *not* present [day] Hal Jordan," said Marz. "This is the Hal at the beginning of his career, thrown into the present with Kyle."

The story starts as Kyle Rayner, returning from the 30th century, time-travels back to our present. In a mishap, Kyle is transported 10 years further back and winds up in the middle of the first Hal Jordan/Sinestro battle from *Green Lantern* (vol. 1) #9. "Because of Kyle's presence, everything is different from that point on," said Marz. "Eventually, Kyle gets tossed back to the future and Hal gets caught up, coming back with him."

Young Hal, stuck in the present, finds out his eventual fate, deals with old supporting cast members like Tom "Pieface" Kalmaku and girlfriend Carol Ferris, and even interacts with the Justice League, particularly Connor Hawke (current Green Arrow and son of Hal's good friend Oliver Queen). "But don't worry, the story won't affect the time stream," said Marz. "Everything will get resolved, but will Hal stick around? That's the real question."

Is this story just a way to bring Hal Jordan back as full-time Green Lantern and satisfy both Hal and Kyle fans? "By no means," said Marz. "This story isn't being done to placate the diehard Hal Jordan fans and we'll just have to see if Hal or Kyle or both are still around when issue #106 ends." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

Hal returns as GL in April—but is he back for good?

DC Lines Up Big-Name Exclusives

Creators on some of **DC Comics'** most popular titles have signed exclusive contracts with the publisher. The *JLA* team supreme of **Grant Morrison** and **Howard Porter**, and **Garth Ennis**, who cranks out the written word monthly for *Preacher* and *Hitman*, recently signed pacts.

Morrison, who also pens Vertigo's *The Invisibles*, said the move will help him ensure quality work, consistently. "Last year, I got a little into a hole by taking on too much work," said Morrison, who also wrote *Vampirella* for Harris Comics. Following a *JLA* break for a couple of issues in early '98, Morrison will return with #22 and hopes to stay with that title and *Invisibles* into the next century. Morrison's new contract runs to early '99, but he said he has storylines for both DC titles worked out until the year 2000.

Porter said it was a logical decision for him to stick with *JLA*. "I wanted to stay with the book and besides, there's not enough time in the day to do anything but *JLA*." But Porter said he does have aspirations beyond his current publisher: "I'd love to do the Fantastic Four after my stint on *JLA*, if Marvel would have me."

Ennis looks at his DC deal simply: "They gave me $10 grand above and beyond what I'm already making and that was it," he said. "DC has always been good and always been straight with me, so I feel very secure. I might sign up for another deal when this one is through."

Ennis' new exclusive deal will still allow him to finish work in progress on his project at Top Cow Productions. "I'm finished with ***The Darkness*** when the current storyline finishes with #14 in April," he reported. "Malachy Coney, the guy I've been co-plotting with, takes over full time from there." ■ *Scott A. Aubrey*

(From left) Ennis, Porter and Morrison become DC's exclusive heavyweights in '98.

Grant Morrison photo: Al Ortega. Garth Ennis and Howard Porter courtesy of DC Comics.

byte this

WHAT'S UP ON **WIZARD WORLD**

Back to (Wizard) School

Looking for a way into the biz? Wizard School gives you the most useful tips for breaking in as a comic creator! This month, *Desperadoes* writer Jeff Mariotte gives scripters tips with his article "Writing the Non-Superhero Comic in a Superhero World."

Check out this article and others at Wizard School at keyword: Wizard on America Online or http://www.wizardpress.com.

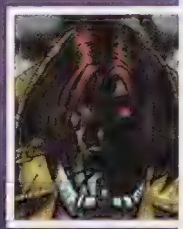
CHAT HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE SPECIAL EVENTS ROOM

MARCH 24 (Tuesday)

• TIM TOWNSEND

Uncanny X-Men inker Tim Townsend gives the lowdown dirt on working on Marvel's flagship X-book!

Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)



MARCH 31 (Tuesday)

• ERIK LARSEN

Controversial and colorful *Savage Dragon* writer/artist Erik Larsen joins us to discuss his Online "EGO" column, which appears for the entire month of March. As a fan and as a pro, Erik pulls no punches. Be prepared!

Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)

APRIL 14 (Tuesday)

• DREW HAYES

The writer/artist of Sirius Entertainment's sensational comic *Poison Elves* joins us online to discuss the future of this cult-classic series.

Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)

APRIL 21 (Tuesday)

• KENNY MARTINEZ

The new penciler of *Turok* joins us online to showcase the new look of the Lost Land. We'll have some cool advance preview art for you to download to check out Kenny's style.

Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)

APRIL 28 (Tuesday)

• TODD DEZAGO

Sensational Spider-Man and *JLA: World Without Adults* writer Todd Dezago comes online to prove that he's not just a pro, but a full-fledged fan as well.

Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)

Check online for full chat schedules including club-hosted chats.

Buddy Scalera (WizardTGTC@aol.com)

A World Created By Jim Lee

A harsh, brutal world. A world of excitement, experienced through a comic book series and a trading card game, released simultaneously from WildStorm Productions and Wizards of the Coast.

Jim Lee's C-23

Brandon CHOI

Jeff MARIOTTE

Alexander LOZANO

covers by Travis CHAREST

A New Concept In Adventure

April 8 Is C-23 Day

The Game. The Comic. The Adventure. Will You Be Ready?

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ABSTRACT STUDIO
May sees the fifth ***Strangers in Paradise*** trade paperback, *Immortal Enemies*, reprinting issues #6-#12 of the current series. It retails for $14.95.

AC COMICS
Hitting in April, ***Femforce*** #109 has the team trapped in a space/time battle that could lead to the extinction of society.

ACCLAIM COMICS
In April, *Quantum and Woody* writer **Christopher Priest** has a big month as he launches the crime series *Concrete Jungle: The Legend of the Black Lion* #1, with pencils by James Fry. Plus, Priest writes the Q&W one-shot *The Goat: H.A.E.D.U.S.* (Heavily Armored Espionage Deadly Uber-Sheep), and if that's not enough Priest for you, you'll also be able to grab the *Quantum and Woody: KYAG* (Kiss Your Ass Goodbye) trade paperback, which collects Q&W #5-#8.

ARCHIE COMICS
Look for the wild wedding of Cousin Ambrose and Enchantra in *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* #15, walking down the aisle in April.

AVATAR PRESS
Snowman battles another Snowman in the first issue of **Matt Martin**'s two-issue mini-*Snowman*^{2} in April.

AWESOME ENTERTAINMENT
April sees the release of *Menace* #1, a gothic horror project written by actress **Jada Pinkett** ("Scream 2").

CHAOS! COMICS
April's ***The Omen*** #1 (of 5) guest-stars practically everyone in the Chaos! Cosmos and ships with six variant covers....**Hart Fisher** (Boneyard Press) writes *Dead King* #1 (of 4) in April.

CRUCIAL COMICS
Rat Bastard #3 hits in April, continuing the saga of Roscoe J. Rodent and his quest for justice in the futuristic Manhattan Empire.

CRUSADE ENTERTAINMENT
Shi: The Series goes biweekly with April's issue #9, which intros Monet, who is involved with Shi's ex-beau Pete DeNyse and is...a werewolf!

DARK HORSE COMICS
Love and Rockets fans should check out April's *Dark Horse Presents* #131, which features an all-new tale by Gilbert Hernandez....Tying in to April's "Lost in Space" film, the three-part ***Lost in Space*** comic begins in April and picks up immediately after the film's ending....Get yer caffeine here! May's ***Too Much Coffee Man: Guide for the Perplexed*** collects a whole cuppa TMCM stories, including 65 one-page strips. The 144-page softcover retails for $10.95, with a limited hardcover available for $49.95.

DC COMICS
The **JLA**, the Teen Titans and Supergirl all guest-star in March's 50th anniversary issue of *Steel*....March's Vertigo offering *Nevada* #1 starts the new ongoing series about a Las Vegas showgirl, her ostrich and space aliens. It's written by **Steve Gerber** (*Howard the Duck*) with art by Phil Winslade (*Goddess*).

DISABLED COMIC COLLECTORS CLUB
The DCCC is in the middle of a membership drive. Contact them at **www.airnet.net/kenj/dclub.html**.

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS
In April, ***Eightball*** #19 gets big. Physically, that is. The issue grows to an oversized magazine size and includes portions of a 100-page graphic novel by Dan Clowes called "David Boring."

HALL OF HEROES
Dragon's Bane, a three-issue series about dragons reemerging in the modern world, launches in March and features up 'n' coming artist Jeff Lawter.

HURRICANE ENTERTAINMENT
Chassis will fly to Hurricane Entertainment with issue #3, wherein race car driver Chassis is confronted by the dreaded Mr. Thorn.

HYPERWORKS COMICS
In case you missed them, ***Deity*** #1-#3 will get collected into a trade paperback appropriately titled *Deity Collected Edition Volume One* in March.

IMAGE COMICS
• HIGHBROW ENTERTAINMENT
In April's *Savage Dragon* #48, the Dragon returns to Chicago to clean out the Vicious Circle gang once and for all. His first stop? Powerhouse, the superpowered chicken! As usual, it's written, penciled and inked by **Erik Larsen**.

• HOMAGE COMICS
April's ***Desperadoes*** #5 is a stand-alone story where the Civil War's Battle of Chancellorsville literally comes back to haunt the Desperadoes.

• TOP COW COMICS
The regular *Witchblade* writing team of **Christina Z.** and David Wohl pen April's *Tales of the Witchblade* #5, featuring a tale from the past that will have repercussions in October's "Witchblade Month."

• WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS
April's *WildStorm Archives: Gen*^{13} ($12.99) is a 528-page black-and-white collection reprinting tons of **Gen^{13}** material, including the initial mini-series and *Gen*^{13} #0-#13....**Jeff Mariotte** (*Desperadoes*) writes the new ongoing (•*23* comic based on the all-new Wizards of the Coast collectible card game.

KITCHEN SINK PRESS
Neil Gaiman contributes "The Return of Mink Stole" to *The Spirit: The New Adventures* #2, on sale in April. Comic legend Will Eisner provides the cover art for the issue.

MARVEL COMICS
June spotlights a one-month Avengers crossover running through *Iron Man* #7, *Captain America* #8, *Quicksilver* #10 and *Avengers* #7. The Kree's Supreme Intelligence and Carol Danvers (the former Binary and Ms. Marvel) will play major roles, as a group of Kree commandos blames the Avengers for the "murder" of the Supreme Intelligence from 1992's *Avengers* #347....John Ostrander takes over as the new writer of *Quicksilver* with March's #7.

RELENTLESS COMICS
Coming in early March, look for ***Nicki Shadow*** #3 (of 4) to continue the cyberpunk adventure.

SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT
Mark Crilley's ***Akiko*** celebrates its 25th issue with 32 pages of self-contained story in April.

SLAVE LABOR GRAPHICS
The April release *Dork* #6 features an all-new "Elfingville" tale by "Milk and Cheese" creator **Evan Dorkin**....*Potential* is the comic book journal of high-school junior **Ariel Schrang** (*Definition*). Look for it in March with a $3.50 cover.

TOPPS COMICS
April's *Xena: Warrior Princess: Orpheus* #2 (of 3) is available with a variant photo cover of "Xena" TV star **Lucy Lawless**.

VEROTIK
Glenn Danzig, **Joe Quesada**, Jimmy Palmiotti, Jason Pearson and others contribute to an alternate jam cover for *Verotik Illustrated* #3.

VIZ COMICS
Fallen Ashen Victor, a series serving as a prequel to the hit manga *Battle Angel Alita*, debuts in April.

Tucci to Customize Covers for Fans

What's five bucks buy these days? Nothing? How 'bout custom original art?

"Nothing" is exactly what will initially grace the cover of Crusade's ***Shi: The Art of War 1998 Tour Book***, a March release priced at $4.95. The sketchbook—a retrospective of work by **Billy Tucci**, including never-before-seen sketches of **Shi** and pencils dating back to Shi's earliest days—features a blank cover. The gimmick is this: Tucci (or a Crusade artist of your choice) will draw an original piece of art on the cover when fans bring their copy and a purchase receipt to one of the 10 scheduled nationwide convention and store appearances listed in the book.

"We asked ourselves, 'How can we do the book, and do something a little more for the fans?' " explained Tucci. "At all the shows, I love to do sketches for the fans, so this seems a good idea and a good value. ■ *Scott A. Aubrey*

No, we didn't goof. The new *Shi Tour Book*'s cover will be blank for original Tucci art at '98 cons.

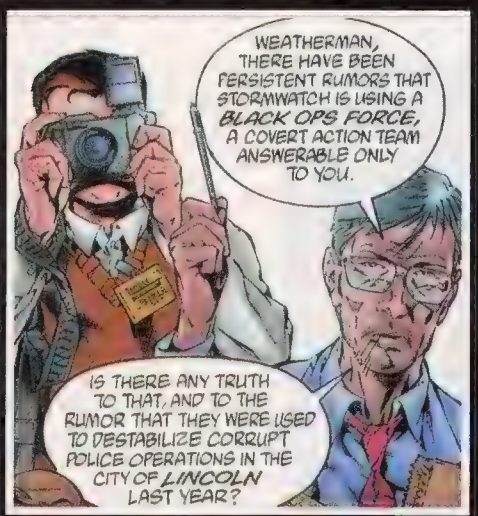
DOUBLE TAKES

Now that's reporting! *Daily Bugle* photographer Peter Parker (Spider-Man to you) and reporter Ben Urich made the trek all the way from Marvel to Image to cover a press conference in WildStorm's *StormWatch* #1. How can that happen? Couldn't WildStorm get sued or something for using Marvel characters?

Technically, yes. But Marvel is pretty lenient with small instances like these. "Comics should be fun and we don't mind taking a little joshing here and there," said Shirrel Rhoades, Marvel's executive vice-president of publishing. "People usually call to get permission to use our characters, but this one we never heard about in advance. If we have friendly relations with the publisher like we do here, we usually just nod and wink at it."

Rhoades wasn't the only one unaware of the unscheduled Marvel appearance in *StormWatch*, writer Warren Ellis said the "first I knew of it was when I picked up the book." Ellis said penciler Oscar Jimenez threw Parker and Urich in all on his own.

Seen something *you* want explained? Drop us a line at: **Double Takes, c/o Wizard: The Comics Magazine; 151 Wells Ave.; Congers, NY 10920**



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Woman of the Hour

Costume contest winner gets shot at starring role in 'Wonder Woman' TV movie

By Gina Logan

Photos: Paul Schiraldi

Here I am dressed as Wonder Woman. I'm freezing my butt off, standing outside the Warner Bros. Studio Store in New York City on a Saturday morning in January. How'd I get here?

I place the blame squarely on *Wizard*.

Sure, I'd heard something about a Wonder Woman open audition for a new TV movie, but never found the details. That is, until *Wizard* called, asking me to attend and keep a diary.

And here I thought they were just calling to renew our subscription!

But I guess it makes sense. Y'see, I was a winner in *Wizard* #75's Halloween Costume Contest dressed as, you guessed it, Wonder Woman. So all it took was a 90-minute ride from New Jersey, and here's my shot at stardom. And as an aspiring actress who's done a little community theater, this offer's a dream come true.

Here's how it all unfolds:

9:15 a.m.: I'm on line with my fiancé Frank at my side, sizing up the competition. It looks like no one else is in costume, which makes me wonder if I should take off the sweats I'm wearing on top of my outfit. None of the other girls seem to jump out and scream "Wonder Woman." They all seem to be cut out of the same cookie cutter—tall with dark hair and false eyelashes. As Frank starts unpacking the rest of my costume, the bright red boots with pure white lines catch the attention of a TV crew from "Access Hollywood." A tall blonde woman followed by an "Access Hollywood" crew asks if I've got the whole costume. Playfully, I lift my sweatshirt to reveal the costume underneath. As I struggle to get undressed right there in the street, I realize the crew's filming. To make things worse, nothing's fitting right. The tiara keeps falling over my eyes as I speak, but they keep filming. I finally let it rest around my neck. Very graceful!

9:30 a.m.: I meet up with the *Wizard* team, staffer Lars Pearson and photographer Paul Schiraldi, who are gonna shadow my every move. As I chat with them, a passing drunk stops to tell me what great legs I have. Another photographer starts to snap away. I'm really starting to have a good time, and enjoy the attention. And I'm surprisingly warm, considering the lack of clothing the costume affords me.

10:15 a.m.: They *finally* let us in, 15 minutes after we were supposed to go in, but we're told that they're gonna lead us upstairs 20 at a time. Those unlucky few that aren't in the first 20 head back outside. "Put your coat on, honey," says one of the oh-so-helpful-and-cheery WB employees. I have to fight the urge to slap her as Frank helps me back into my coat. We all line up outside the front entrance of the store. Again. Unfortunately, the wind's now whipping down 57th Street and it's considerably colder. I'm losing feeling in my fingers and toes, so I jump up and down to keep warm. What a sight this has gotta be. Wonder Woman in a long suede jacket jumping around 57th street. Oh yeah.

11:00 a.m.: They thankfully call us inside. WARMTH!!! Frank takes my coat and adjusts my costume, repinning the back and handing me a brush. My wig's quite messy from the wind. He grabs me by the shoulders and says, "Look, you go up there and knock 'em dead. I don't see any competition here. You are Wonder Woman!"

We pile into a Superman-propelled glass elevator (very cool, I might add). A very small girl in a very large WB baseball cap tells us there will be forms to fill out and we'll get a number. We reach the fifth floor, and I begin filling out paperwork. I look up to face a wall of camera lenses and flashbulbs. "Just try to look natural, like you're filling out your paperwork," a reporter yells. Well, duh—that's what I'm doing!

A reporter from *Entertainment Weekly* approaches me for an interview. No sooner do I finish that one when "The View" asks for an on-tape interview. I feel like a star, and really suprise myself with how at ease I am on camera. I can't believe how well this is going or how good I feel.

12:10 p.m.: Another WB employee comes to tell me I'm next. My heart skips a beat, but I'm not nervous. (Usually I'm a wreck.) Oh boy, here we go! I'm led into a makeshift studio, introduced to the man conducting the interview and told where to stand and what to say. I take a deep breath, smile and say into the camera, "My name is Gina Logan and I'm auditioning for the role of Diana Prince in 'Wonder Woman.'" Easy enough. He asks me some questions about my community theater work and about myself, thanks me, shakes my hand and it's over.

12:30 p.m.: We decide to go down to the lobby for more pictures. I'm glad because I'm not ready for it to end yet! As we stand waiting for the elevator, I look at the big, huge floor-to-ceiling windows. People hurry about, and two older gentlemen wave to me. I wave back. They blow me kisses, and I bow and kiss back. I guess they think I work here. Ha!

1:00 p.m.: Finally it's time to get out of costume. By now I'm ready. Nearly eight hours in that thing is enough for me! But this whole day was really special, something I won't soon forget. Regardless of whether I get the part or not, I was a star for a day. W

A WIZARD EXCLUSIVE

Inside the Fantastic

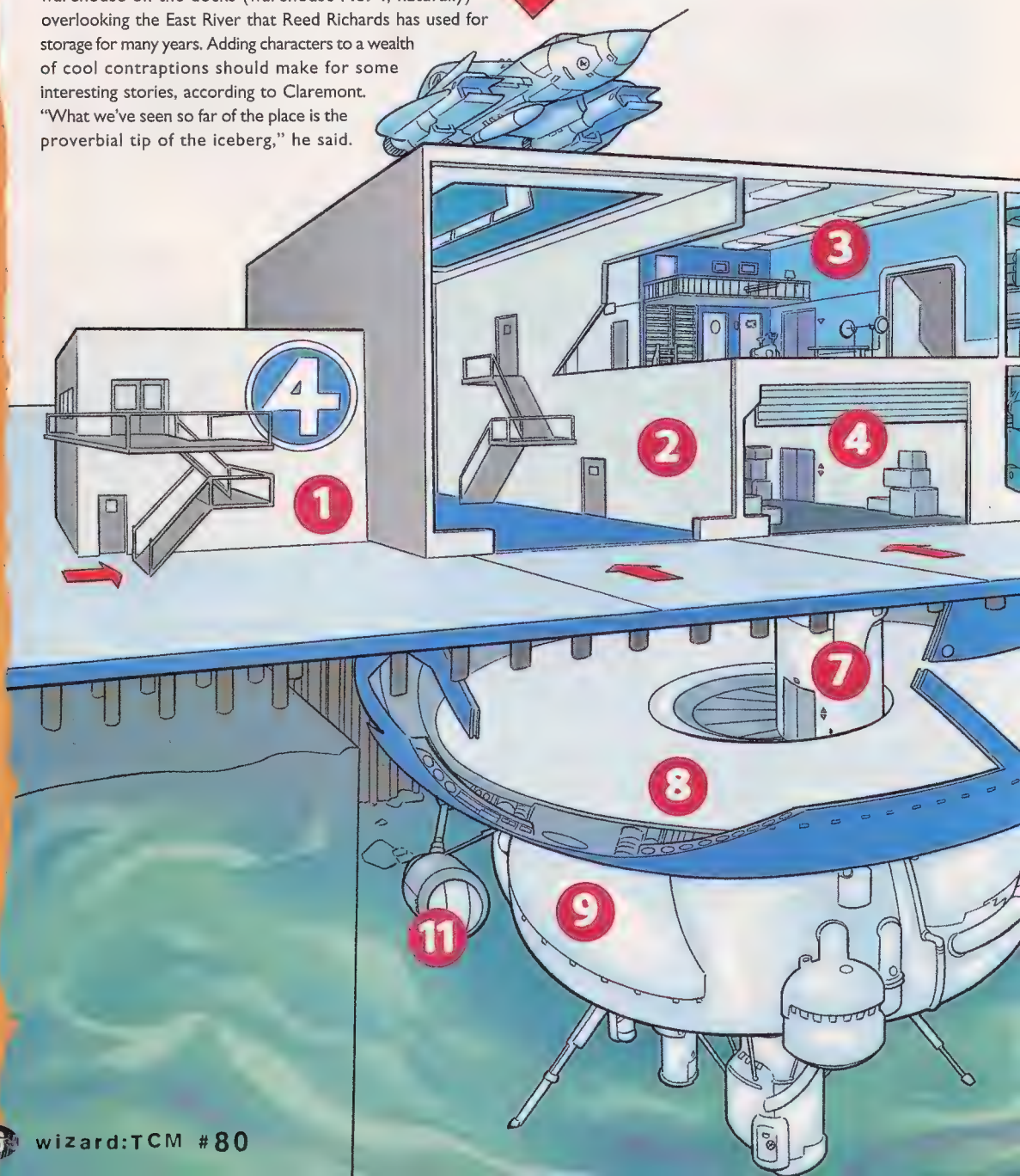
The **Baxter Building** is history and the **Thunderbolts** blew up **Four Freedoms Plaza**. So the "Heroes Return" Fantastic Four are living in…a warehouse? Yep. But it's a pretty interesting warehouse.

"Did you ever wonder where Reed Richards put all that stuff he's been building over the years?" asked new *FF* writer **Chris Claremont**. "It's all here and we're going to show you." Without a regular "home," the FF have moved into a warehouse on the docks (warehouse No. 4, naturally) overlooking the East River that Reed Richards has used for storage for many years. Adding characters to a wealth of cool contraptions should make for some interesting stories, according to Claremont. "What we've seen so far of the place is the proverbial tip of the iceberg," he said.

"Probably 90 percent of it is still unrevealed. I think in terms of size and mystery, this place will blow away the old Baxter Building."

And this cut-away view should help readers follow along with future stories… W

Pencils by Salvador Larroca, inks by Jimmy Palmiotti, colors by Twilight Graphics.



Four's Headquarters!

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THEY RISE...

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Wizard *casts the* Darkness *movie!*

Casting Call

By a bunch of *Wizard* staffers

All photos not credited are from the Everett Collection.

Is it just us or is *The Darkness* primed and ready for the big screen?

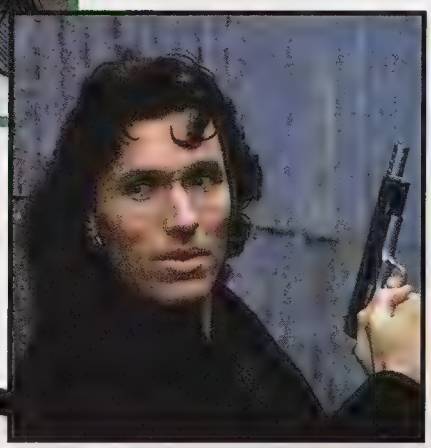
Let's run down what it's got: Hitman Jackie Estacado's greatest gift is also his worst nightmare—a power beyond mortal comprehension. Called the Darkness, this centuries-old force turns its male host into a deadly weapon, an object of mass destruction. With the Darkness, Estacado can give life to anything from his imagination. Anything.

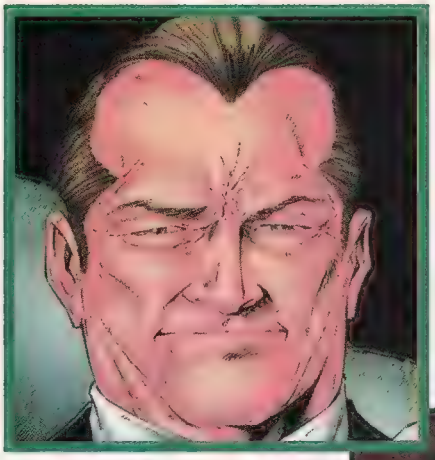
The Darkness' curse is a heavy one, though. Estacado's power only functions in the shadows. If its wielder impregnates a woman, the power is immediately passed to the fetus and the former host dies. Worse yet, the Darkness is a point of great contention between the forces of good (the Angelus) and evil (the Brotherhood of Darkness).

Somewhere, between the Darkness and the light, a great film would emerge. Our picks for "The Darkness: The Movie"? Read on…

JACKIE ESTACADO

Cold, calculating killer Jackie Estacado has the face of some modern-day Adonis. As a creepy goon in "Karate Kid: Part 3," pretty-boy Thomas Ian Griffith did a very Estacado-esque guy.





FRANKIE "THE DON" FRANCHETTI

We're currently writing a book on why Danny Aiello ("The Professional") should portray mob boss Don Franchetti. Reason #502? Aiello's wiseguys are so bad, they transcend into greatness.

JENNY

As the series' good girl, bartender Jenny loves Estacado—but can't have him. Sophie Marceau played an innocent queen whose love for a man brought her tragedy in "Braveheart," so why not?

© Bill Devlin/Outline

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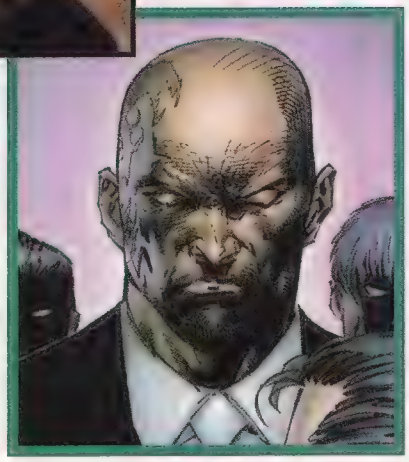
ANGELUS

If she fell from grace and lost her wings, the beautiful and dangerous Angelus might start a new life as actress Denise Richards from "Starship Troopers."



LORD SONATINE

Get this fetid leader of the Brotherhood of Darkness some Minoxidil—and a heart. Gravelly voiced F. Murray Abraham painted six shades of evil in his role as a convicted killer in "An Innocent Man" and would excel as the villainous, scheming Sonatine.

WENDERS

Sonatine's gutless lackey Wenders has an annoying real-life *compadre* in the mealy-mouthed David Spade. Suffer through "Tommy Boy" to view Spade as the quintessential pathetic toady.

© Chris Sanders/Outline

DARKUS

Expect Estacado's main imp to be the specialest effect of all. Darkus' mouth should spew the harsh, raspy tones of voicemaster general Hank Azaria ("The Simpsons," "Mad About You").

© Don Cherkin/Outline

IAN NOTTINGHAM

Suave and mischievous, Phillip Rhee ("Best of the Best") possesses the tools to be the evilest of the evil, Ian Nottingham.

TORA NO SHI

Smooth, wiry, face-kicking virtuoso Dennis Dun ("Big Trouble in Little China") as the Japanese assassin Tora No Shi? Sure—he'd be a killer, both literally and figuratively.

© Michael Tighe/Outline

APPOLONIA FRANCHETTI

Don Franchetti's daughter is unadulterated scum, but beautiful enough to charm the pants off a snake. Vanessa Marcil ("The Rock") is beautiful enough to make a snake wear a pair of Dockers. And her acting? *Intense!* W

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Happily Ever After?

Linda Medley's 'Castle Waiting' opens a new chapter on fairy tales by revealing the story AFTER the story

By Jennifer Moore

Where most fairy tales end, Linda Medley's begins.

In her new comic, *Castle Waiting*, well-known fairy tales and nursery rhymes such as *Sleeping Beauty*, *Simple Simon* and *The Three Little Pigs* take on a whole new perspective as she explores just how happy their ever-afters really are. Medley breaks the confines of fable by reinterpreting familiar characters as ordinary people dealing with incredible circumstances.

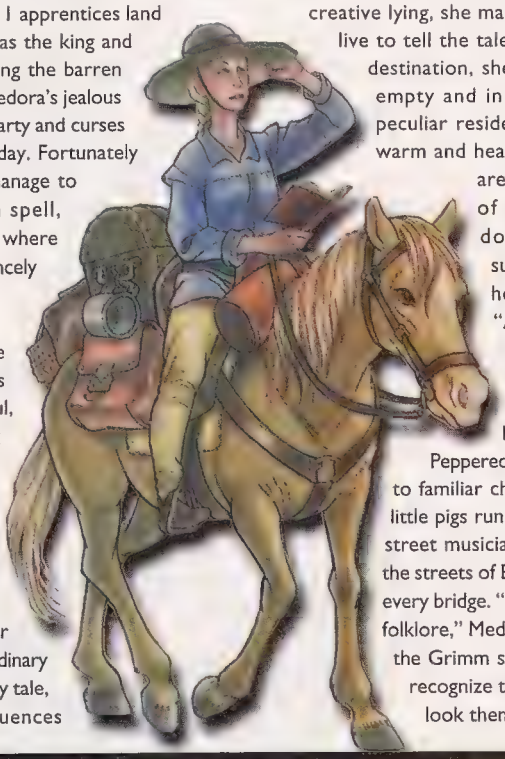
"The book isn't just about fantasy and magic and fairy tales," she says. "It's about how human these characters are. They act like humans, even if they don't really look human. Sure, there's a Prince Charming, but he acts just like your brother-in-law."

The series grew out of Medley's experience as an illustration major in college. She wanted to adapt the Brothers Grimm fables in comic book form, but set the project aside in favor of work on children's books and DC's *Green Lantern* and *Justice League America* titles. It was Jeff Smith's fantasy title *Bone*, however, which inspired her return to fairy tales. "I remember reading Jeff's book and thinking, 'This is really good—and it's not superheroes!'"

Opposite: In the *Curse* prelude, it's hard to believe she's the GOOD witch.
Above: The arrival of Jain (below) to the Castle raises a few eyebrows.

Medley prefaced her series with a one-shot graphic novel, *The Curse of Brambly Hedge*, which was nominated for a 1997 Eisner Award. The story takes place over a century before *Castle Waiting* begins, detailing the history of the palace in the title. Good witch Medora and her 11 apprentices land lucrative and prestigious positions as the king and queen's official witches after granting the barren couple a daughter. Unfortunately, Medora's jealous sister Mald crashes the christening party and curses the infant to die on her 15th birthday. Fortunately for the princess, the 12 witches manage to find a loophole in Mald's death spell, finessing it into an enchanted sleep, where she could only be awakened by a princely kiss. Sound familiar?

Like many classic tales, the ongoing *Castle Waiting* series opens on a dark and stormy night. A fearful, determined and very pregnant young woman, Jain, escapes from a castle stronghold with the help of a loyal sentry bear. Though it's initially unclear why she fled, we later discover that she's pregnant by someone other than her husband. "She's a perfect example of a regular person who gets sucked into extraordinary events, like most characters in a fairy tale, and has to deal with the consequences afterward," Medley says.



Using her father's map to guide her, Jain sets out to find the mythic sanctuary, Castle Waiting. En route she runs afoul of a pack of gypsies who make off with her steed in the night. With the help of two shifty dwarven balladeers and some creative lying, she manages to take back her horse and live to tell the tale. When Jain finally arrives at her destination, she finds the legendary palace near empty and in a state of disrepair. What few peculiar residents remain, however, give her a warm and hearty welcome. Among the tenants are an ill-tempered blacksmith, a trio of aged handmaidens, an insane doctor who never removes his surgical mask and a nun who walks her pet demon, Piety, on a leash. "A large part of the story is seeing the castle return to its former glory, watching it evolve from a vacant place to a bustling citadel," Medley says.

Peppered throughout the book are references to familiar children's stories and rhymes: three little pigs run the Wolf's Head Inn, mothers and street musicians sing Mother Goose rhymes on the streets of Brementown and trolls hide beneath every bridge. "I could have gone really far back into folklore," Medley says, "but I decided to stop with the Grimm stories. I want people to be able to recognize these references and also be able to look them up for themselves."

Even the Three Little Pigs have new life courtesy of *Castle Waiting*.

Medley also reveals that most of the characters are taken from fables. Dr. Fell for example, the germ phobic doctor, is the title character of a Mother Goose rhyme. Simon, the large half-witted son of the castle's cook, is an obvious homage to *Simple Simon*. "Even Jain is from a fairy tale, but I don't want to tell you which one," Medley teases. "I don't want to give too much away about her story."

Fantasy themes aside, Medley has taken great pains to accurately portray the story's medieval setting. Her eye for detail is evident in the characters' costumes which are taken from period woodcuts, in the authentic Romany dialect that a band of Gypsies speak and even in the use of benches as opposed to chairs in taverns and dining rooms. Medley is able to strike a balance between realism and whimsy that is both quirky and harmonious.

Even the title, "Castle Waiting," has a peculiar ring to it. "I'd taken the title from Arthurian legend," Medley explains. "In those stories, the castles had descriptive names like 'Castle Perilous' or 'Castle Joyous Gard.' The name 'Castle Waiting' can be open to many interpretations: is it a castle waiting at the end of a journey or is it a castle waiting for its king to return?"

Castle Waiting, which goes bimonthly with May's issue #6, sheds even more light on its bizarre inhabitants in the future. "For the next year, I'll be exploring the castle-dwellers' backgrounds and watching them grow," Medley says. "With Jain's help, Simon becomes smarter and more aware, and his mental growth will prompt him to leave home and explore the world outside the castle."

Besides a major confrontation between Jain and her estranged husband, look for new characters to join the cast including a knight and wizard. "The wizard's arrival causes some conflict among the residents," Medley says, "considering the Castle's history with witches. One of these new characters will eventually become a love interest for Jain."

Medley says the plot will eventually come to an end, growing more serious and complicated along the way. What lies in store for Jain? Even though her creator foresees some grim twists and turns for the heroine, she assures us that *Castle Waiting* will end happily ever after.

Not surprising, since that's just what you'd expect from a good fairy tale in the first place. **W**

The only castle New Jersey-based freelancer Jennifer Moore ever waited at was White Castle. And she didn't find any princes.

Waiting in the Wings

Here's a quick rundown on the bizarre characters who inhabits the realm of Linda Medley's *Castle Waiting*.

Jain

Jain, our main character, mysteriously fled from her home and her estranged husband to travel to the legendary Castle Waiting in order to give birth to her child in safety. The residents know her as the Countess of Carabas; whether she truly is what she claims to be remains to be seen.

Dinah Lucina

While generally good-natured, the castle's cook can't stand any disruption in her kitchen—especially by the innumerable sprites and pixies infesting the palace like mice. Dinah has made fast friends with Jain and watches over her with motherly concern.

Simon

Otherwise known as "Simple Simon," Dinah's childlike, overgrown son has taken an immediate shine to Jain. In exchange for showing her a secret—the castle's haunted library—Jain has agreed to teach Simon how to read.

Rackham Adjutant

Originally hired by the Handmaidens as Castle Steward, this kindly stork-man has a talent for defusing tense situations and tending to the palace-dwellers' needs.

Iron Henry

According to Dinah, this blacksmith's cold temperament is a result of losing his son to an evil enchantment and his heart being bound with three iron bands. Jain's arrival, and the arrival of her baby, has begun to melt Henry's icy facade, however.

The Handmaidens

Patience, Prudence and Plenty were original residents of the Castle, waiting on the Princess Medora until she abruptly ran off with the prince who woke her from her enchanted sleep. Since then, these doddering ladies have been pining for the glory days of the royal court.

It's No Bull!

The rumors are true! Top Cow has secretly produced a brand-new Witchblade comic book co-starring Lara Croft from the mega-hot video game **Tomb Raider**!

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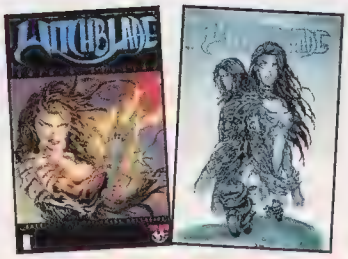

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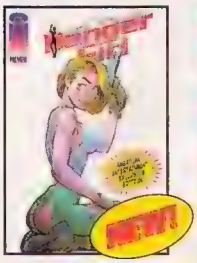

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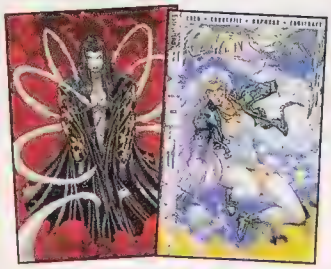

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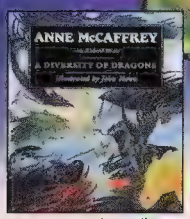

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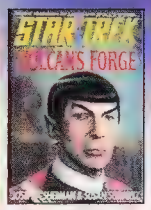

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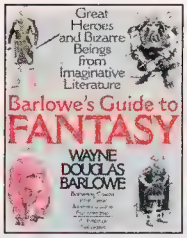

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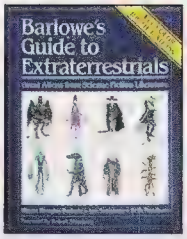

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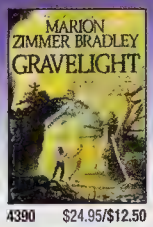
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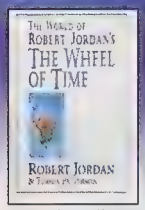
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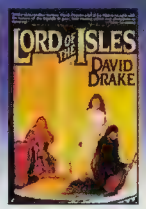
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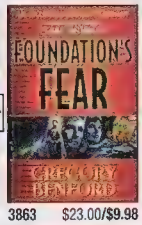
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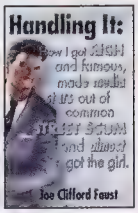
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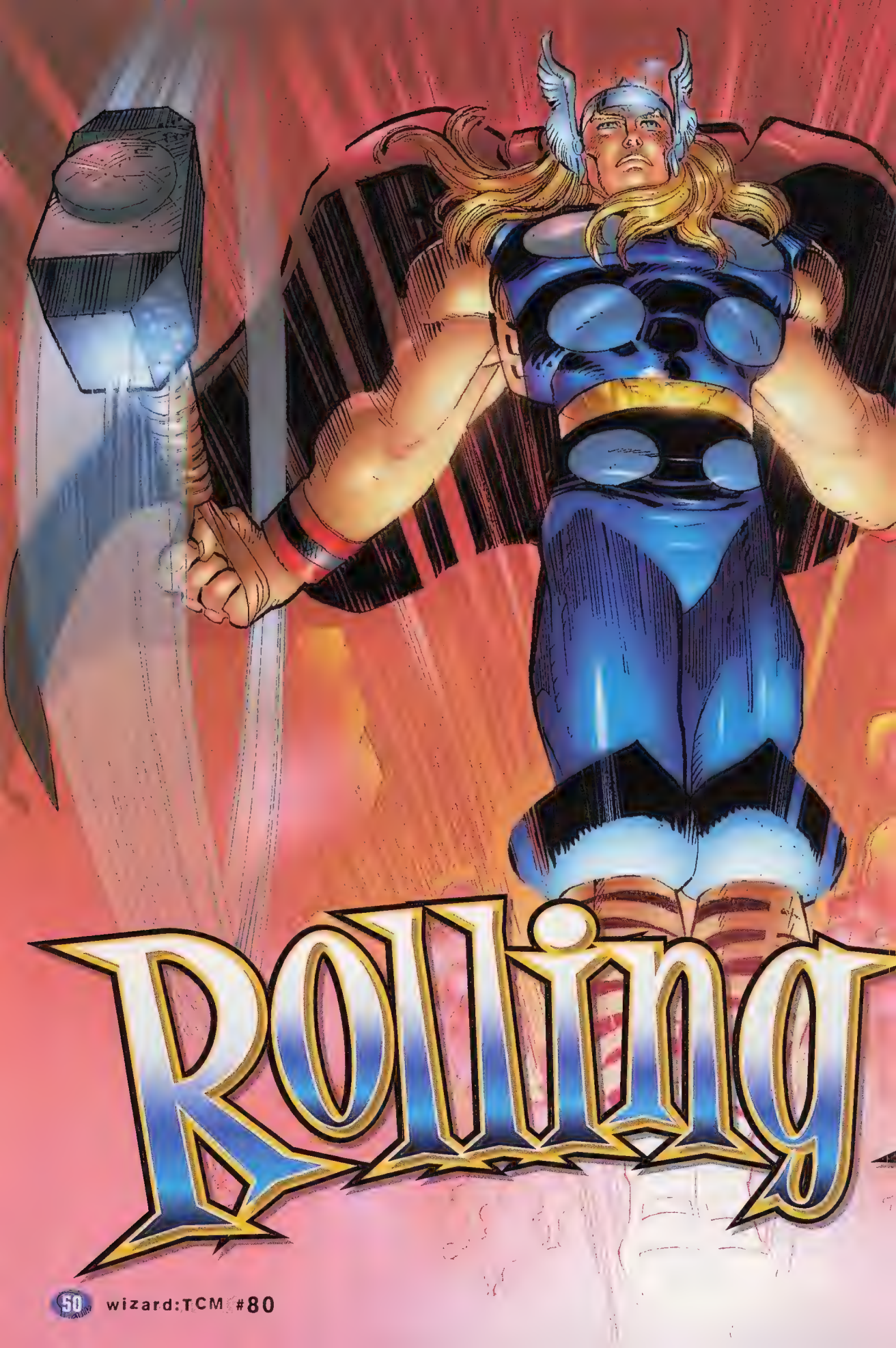

Rolling

Dan Jurgens and John Romita Jr. rock THOR's world as the thunder god gets a new secret identity and new title in May

"Thor can kick darned near anyone's ass," says Dan Jurgens. So if that's the case, why have fans never given Marvel's Norse God of Thunder his due?

Jurgens believes he has the answer. "Many fans think Thor is just a great big tool the Avengers use to beat on things," the writer says of the Asgardian hero. "They don't feel for him as a character. When Thor hasn't worked in the past, it's been because there's no connection to *us*, to humanity."

Jurgens will get his chance to make that connection in May as the prominent *Superman* writer joins superstar artist John Romita Jr. on the new ongoing *Thor*. The arrogant Asgardian thunder god, wielder of the sacred hammer Mjolnir, is both an Avenger in good standing and one of the Marvel Universe's most powerful juggernauts. But in late 1996, Thor was transported to a separate "pocket universe" for a year becoming a hero without his own title for the first time in 36 years.

Now *Thor* is set to return with A-list talent and, according to Jurgens, a surefire way to make Thor work this time around.

"We need to add a sense of personal loss. That's what's made so many classic characters like Spider-Man popular. We can identify with them. There's a personal connection. Our job is tough. We have to make people feel for a *god*."

So how is that gonna happen? "At the start," Jurgens says, "it's by building a civilian life for Thor in a new way."

That way is named Jake Olson. In the new *Thor* #1, Olson appears as a paramedic called to the scene of one of Marvel's many superhero battles. In this case, Thor is tussling with The Asgardian Destroyer, a massive suit of mystical armor designed to demolish gods. But, Jurgens says, "Thor is so consumed with battle, he doesn't pay proper attention to the peril of mortal man." Olson dies an innocent bystander in this battle, his only crime trying to help others.

By Jim McLauchlin

Enter a mysterious and powerful new entity called Marnot. Jurgens says Marnot, for reasons that "we aren't prepared to reveal yet, makes Thor live out Olson's life—a life that he should have saved, but didn't." Marnot magically transforms Thor, forcing him to live out the remainder of Olson's life. And while Thor sees this as a penalty, Jurgens isn't letting the cat out of the bag as to what it all ultimately means. "Whether it's a lesson, a punishment, or just fate, who knows?"

As Olson, Thor is just an average mortal with no powers. Thor will still be aware that he is the thunder god and can effectively become Thor with full power when needed through sheer force of will. "He'll find the transfer very difficult to master in the beginning," hints Jurgens.

A human anchor for Thor is nothing new. In the original *Thor* series, Thor was forced to inhabit the mortal body of the handicapped Dr. Donald Blake as a lesson in humility from his father, Odin. Jurgens thinks "A human alter ego is a good way to let a reader identify with Thor in that he now has a human life," Jurgens says. "He inherits this whole life with all the personal entanglements that come with it. He suddenly finds himself in the body of a man who's engaged to a woman he doesn't even recognize. That will add a heavy dose of human drama to the book. And since paramedics always work in twos, Thor inherits a partner. Having to duck away to enter the battle as Thor will definitely make for some difficult moments."

"I love what we're doing in the first year," says Romita Jr. "Dan laid it out for me and said, 'Here's the plan. And

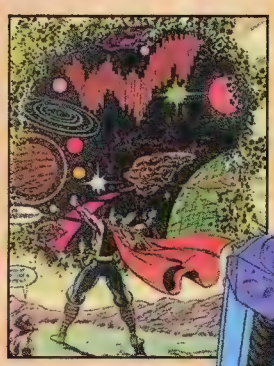
The Power of Thor

We all know that Thor's a god. But just how powerful does that make him?

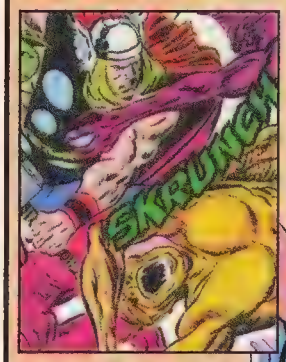
Weather Control: By tapping the magical enchantments of his hammer Mjolnir, Thor can summon storm elements (wind, rain, thunder, lightning, etc.). ▶

◀ **Strength:** Thor can lift upwards of 100 tons, putting him in Marvel's elite class. He also has incredible endurance, resistance to virtually all sickness and disease and can withstand and heal practically any wound.

Interdimensional Travel: Mjolnir can open interdimensional portals, allowing Thor to travel between Earth, Asgard and other realms. ▶



Fighting: Thor is a highly skilled warrior who has had many centuries of battle to perfect his craft. ▼



Flight: Thor's hammer, Mjolnir, is the vehicle through which Thor "flies." By throwing the hammer and grabbing on to its leather thong a split-second later, Thor is propelled by the hammer into flight. ■ *JM* ▶

Thor's new alter ego: paramedic Jake Olson.

here's when we get to Asgard. And when we get there, you can do what you please.'"

The first six issues of *Thor* will take place on Earth, with a background Asgardian plot slowly building and set to explode when the book is established.

Asgard was destroyed by an unknown force just prior to the start of "Heroes Reborn," and Jurgens promises that the fate of Asgard will be followed up on. "In *Thor* #1, we see what's left of Asgard. And it's not pretty. But we build slowly. By issue #7, things start to percolate. The first Asgardian plot climaxes by the end of the first year. Most importantly, the re-introduction of Odin must be pumped up. There must be *drama* there. He's Odin, the father of the gods. He can't just be tossed in randomly."

What Romita Jr. pleases is the aforementioned All-Father Odin. "I want to draw Odin more than anyone else in this book!" he exclaims with a discernible growl of excitement in his voice. "He's a lot like Thor, but taken to the nth degree. I want to draw him looking huge, carrying a scepter, holding the Odinsword, looking all regal on his throne. I am looking so forward to drawing the Asgardian stuff. I'm going to do it huge, and it's going to look dynamite!"

Romita Jr. looks to Asgardian scenery as a welcome change. "I wanna draw something *planetary*," he says longingly. "I want to do something where Thor uses this powerful hammer to suck a whole world through a hole in space or something. It's special effects I'm not used to 'cause I'm on Spider-Man, but I am *salivating* over it."

Surprisingly, Romita Jr. will not ditch *Peter Parker: Spider-Man* as he takes on *Thor*. And so he takes on an assignment considered impossible by today's artists: penciling two monthly books. "I've done real-world books like Spidey and *Daredevil*," Romita Jr. says. "Now my fun is found in something of godlike scope. And call me greedy, but I'm not giving up Spidey."

But even with an obvious desire to pencil Asgard, Romita Jr. thinks the key to this new book will be, "Balance. It's a really easy decision. Too much Thor on Earth is boring. Too much in Asgard is boring. But when Asgard slips into Earth and vice versa, that's where things get interesting."

Jurgens agrees with Romita Jr. wholeheartedly. "If Thor is exclusively in Asgard, he loses some 'specialness,' because there,

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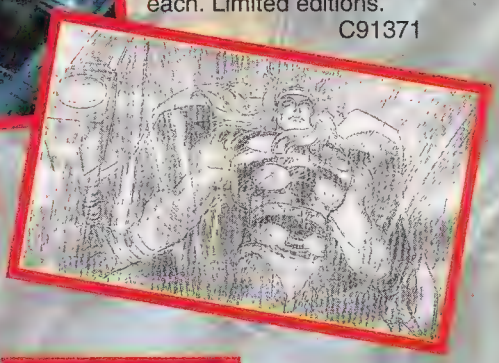

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he's just one of 55 gods. We're not going to exclude Asgard by any means, but a mixed bag of goods, a variety of Earth and Asgard, of old and new, is the balance we're looking for."

In terms of power, Jurgens is going to make sure that there will be no chumps in Thor's rogues gallery, as have been in the past. "Thor's foes just *have* to be big in scope," he says. "He's Thor. He's a god. The only foes that are worthy of him are godlike."

The Asgardian Destroyer, a figure Romita Jr. calls, "just awesome in size, bulk and power," provides a weighty challenge right off the bat. After that, Jurgens promises "villains designed to provide Thor with a legitimate threat."

At least one Marvel mainstay will be tapped early: Dr. Doom. "It's amazing that in their long histories, Doom and Thor have not encountered each other much. But there is now a link between them that will be explored. There was the lost time where Doom and Thor were separated from the rest of the characters at the end of the *Heroes Reborn: The Return* mini-series. We'll touch on that."

And what of Thor's traditional arch-nemesis, his half-brother Loki? Jurgens is holding off spotlighting him immediately. "But he's still the grand manipulator. Even if he's not center stage, he's behind the scenes somewhere."

Another past drawback was Thor's manner of speech. Famous for spouting "Forsooth!" and "Aye, verily!" Thor's Asgardian dialect has been a hurdle many readers have had a difficult time climbing. "We're going to pull back somewhat," Jurgens says. "I don't want to make *Thor* inaccessible to kids who might be struggling with Shakespeare in school." Which is not to say that Thor's distinctive speech will fall away entirely. Jurgens thinks previous *Thor* writer Warren Ellis "made Thor almost streetwise, which was going too far. But [previous writer] Walter Simonson found a happy medium, and as usual, [*Thor*'s first writer] Stan Lee hit it right. Thor will have a bit of the grandeur in his speech that is important to him, but he will be very readable."

That grandeur of speech is important to another characteristic of Thor's makeup—his trademark arrogance. "How Thor speaks to humans shows just how removed from humanity he is," Jurgens says. "We deal with it right away in issue #1, where Thor encounters police at a battle scene. The cops don't even want Thor there. They can't relate to him. They'd much rather Captain America was there. Cap is human. But when you're standing shoulder-to-shoulder with Thor, you're standing next to a *god*. That's a big statement. That's intimidating."

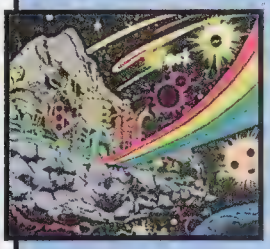
The aloofness and intimidation factor may be tough to overcome. But with name creators and with the new *Thor* riding the crest of Marvel's recent relaunchings of other heroes, Thor may have a better chance to succeed now than at any other point in his history.

"I know that we can build a personal connection to Thor and still do kick-ass battle stories at the same time," says Jurgens. "I like characters with a large scope and Thor's scope is *anywhere*. It's up to us to take him there." **W**

Staff writer and massive powerhouse Jim McLauchlin can sing, too. He knows 53 verses of "What Do You Do With a Drunken Sailor?"

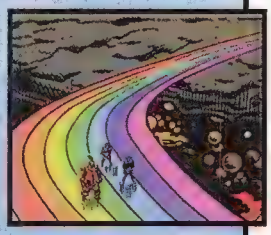
Thunder God 101

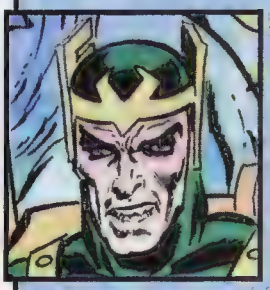
Confounded by all this Norse mythology and assorted hoo-hah? You ain't the only one, brother. Here are a few basics of Thor knowledge essential to enjoying the new *Thor*:



◀ **Asgard:** Home of Thor and all the Norse gods. Asgard is located in the heavens above Earth, or "Midgard," as the Asgardians call it.

Rainbow Bridge: Also known as "Bifrost," this mythical bridge connects Midgard to Asgard. It's protected and watched over by the Asgardian god Heimdall. ▶

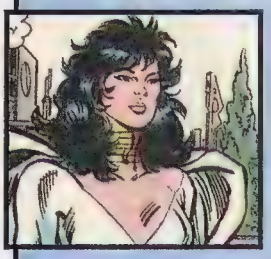




◀ **Loki:** Thor's half-brother and evil trickster god of the Aesir, or Norse gods. He's been Thor's main nemesis since day one.

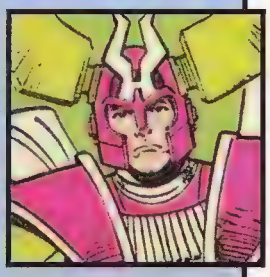
Odin: All-Father of the Aesir. Odin is Thor's father and king god of the Asgardians. ▶

Valhalla, Hel, Niffleheim: Aspects of the afterlife in Norse myth. Heroes and honored dead go to Valhalla when they die, while the "common dead" go to Hel and evil-doers go to Niffleheim. Valhalla is located within Asgard, Hel and Niffleheim below.

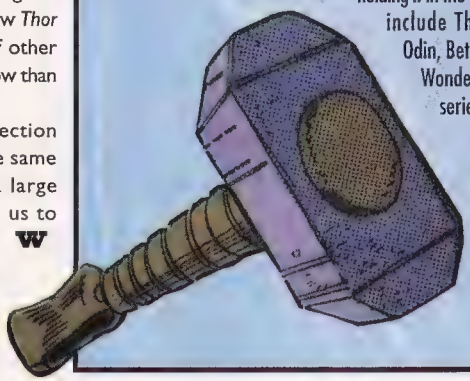


◀ **Sif:** Warrior goddess of Asgard, Thor's childhood friend and occasional main squeeze.

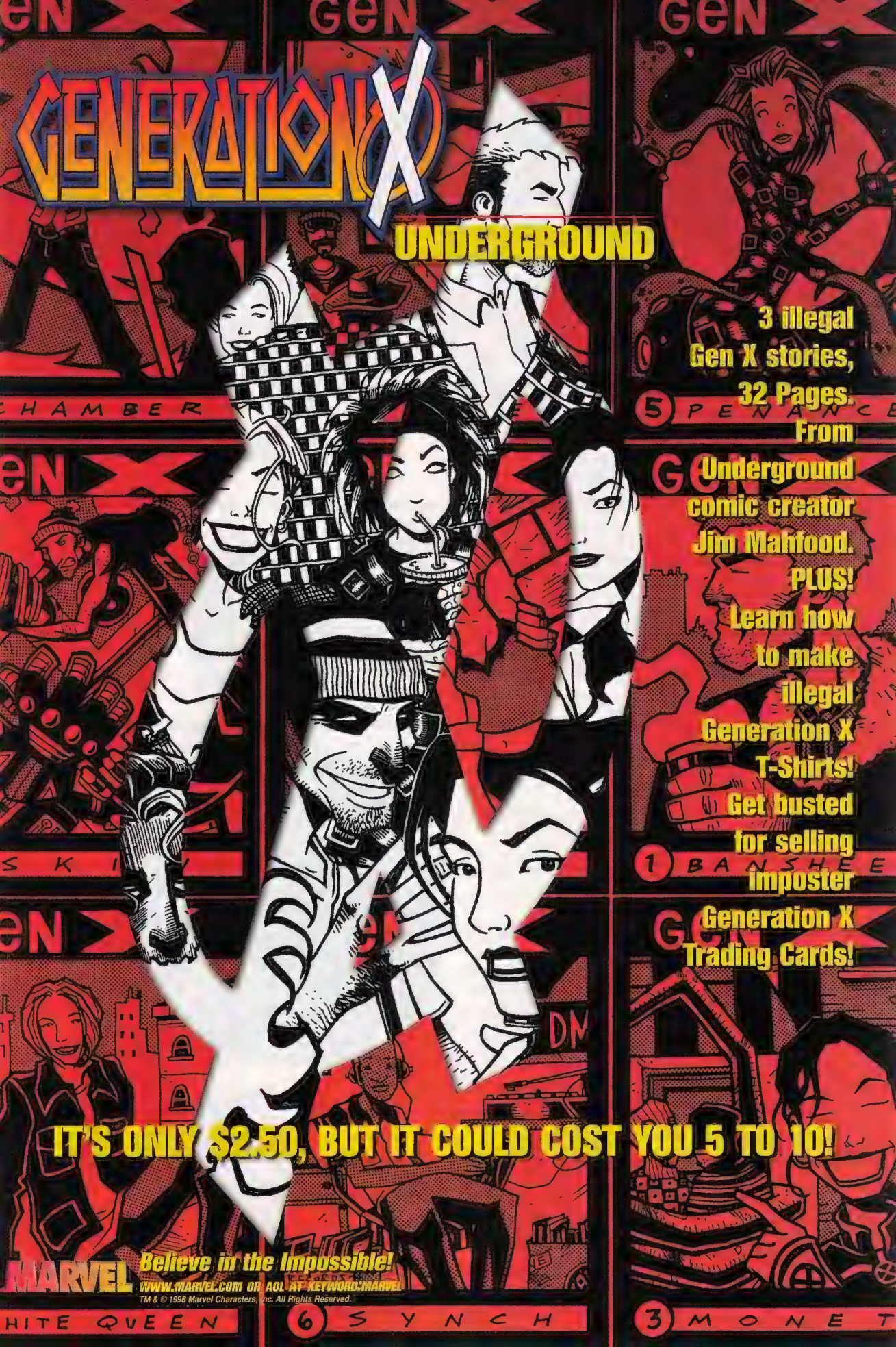
Balder: Asgardian God of Light. He has been Thor's best friend for millennia and is regarded in Asgard as second only to Thor as a warrior. ▶



▼ **Mjolnir:** Thor's hammer, forged by dwarven craftsmen from the mystical metal "uru." Its inscription reads "Whosoever holds this hammer, if he be worthy, shall possess the power of Thor." People shown worthy of holding it in the past include Thor, Odin, Beta Ray Bill, Captain America and even Wonder Woman (in the *Marvel vs. DC* mini-series).



Ragnarok: "Twilight of the Gods." The inevitable and feared prophesied day when all the Asgardian gods will die. ■ *JM*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Nasty Boys

When the 10 dirtiest, nastiest superheroes slug it out in a bar brawl, who will survive?

By the *Wizard* staff

Ten men enter. One man leaves.

Take 10 of the baddest, cheap-shot-taking, dirty-trick-playing, meanest superheroes on the planet. Then put 'em all in one place...and see the fireworks.

Yeah, there are certainly more powerful guys than our 10 Nasty Boys like Superman or the Silver Surfer, smarter guys like Batman and Captain America, and flashier guys like Green Lantern and Iron Man, but these fellas play by the rules. Only the dirtiest of the dirty take part in this free-for-all.

What we've done is plant these roughhousers all in a dimly lit, backwater bar and—CRASH—a beer bottle breaks, kicking off our slugfest. So stand back as the bloodiest battle royal of all time explodes until one—only the toughest, meanest and baddest bruiser of 'em all—is left standing.

And the contestants are...

10 CASSIDY

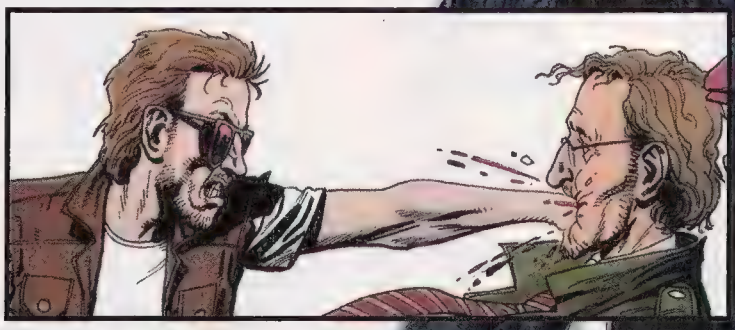
WHO? An ex-IRA Irish Vampire with a taste for hard booze, loose women and rare steak, last seen with Jesse "Preacher" Custer and Tulip O'Hare on a quest to find God. Literally.

WHY'D HE MAKE THE LIST? Well...he's an ex-IRA vampire. He's got inhuman strength, isn't afraid of violence and, when you get him mad (and drunk) enough, he kinda loses control and tends to rip things (read: dumb arses who get in his way) apart.

CLAIM TO SHAME: In *Preacher* #16, Cassidy punched a guy in the mouth so hard, his hand got stuck in there.

WHY #10? Yeah, why wouldn't Cass, who's so all juiced up with cool vampire powers and is no stranger to violence, not go the distance? Simple. As tough as he is (he's had his head, limbs and "li'l Cassidy" blown off...and lived to tell about it), Cassidy's first thought is usually one thing: liquor. In this barroom brawl setting, we see him using the chaos to hit the bar's liquor supply and get good and tanked without ever mixing it up with one of the costumed bruisers on this list. Heck, two bottles of Johnny Walker Red later and he's taken himself outta this fight.

TIME LASTING: 0:00



9 AQUAMAN

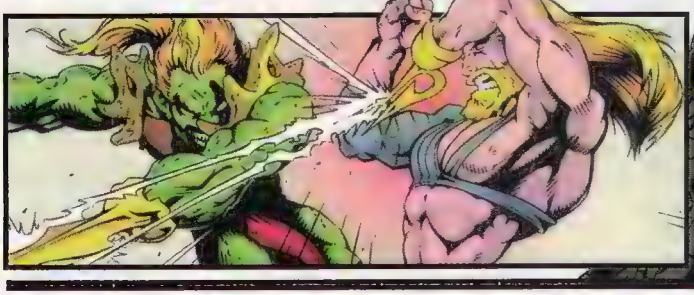
WHO? Arthur Curry, son of an Atlantean queen and a wizard, current JLA member and King of Atlantis.

WHY'D HE MAKE THE LIST? 'Cause he's no "Super Friends" do-gooder. He's a lot tougher, meaner and deadlier than you remember him from day's past. Heck, the Sea King's even offed a few baddies that pushed him too far! With his harpoon hand, massive strength, super-tough skin and telepathic ability that can "turn off" your mind, the hot-headed Aquaman has gone from being DC's wet-joke to one of the company's most dangerous A-list heroes.

CLAIM TO SHAME: Kicked the Justice League's ass in *Aquaman* #16.

WHY #9? As hot-headed and reckless as Aquaman can be, he also doesn't go looking for fight. Heck, he'd rather just be left alone than get dragged into the latest superhero craziness. We see Arthur rolling his eyes back when the fight begins and then trying to make his way out of the bar and away from these lunatics when—BAM!—a cheap shot from the queen of cheap shots, our #8 brawler, would take him down.

TIME LASTING: One minute, 30 seconds



8 MARROW

WHO? The bloodthirsty former Morlock and newest X-Man has the ability to grow razor-sharp bones out of her body and use them as weapons.

WHY'D SHE MAKE THE LIST? She almost killed Wolverine. Yep, the ferocious Marrow was duking it out with the li'l Canadian fella when—while playing possum—jammed a jagged bone in Logan's throat, almost killing him (see *X-Men* #72 for all the gory details). Almost murdering her teammate is just a taste of what Marrow—who grew up in the Morlock survival-of-the-fittest environment and who witnessed the butchering of her people—is capable of.

CLAIM TO SHAME: Survived having one of her two hearts pulled out of her chest in *Uncanny X-Men* #325.

WHY #8? As tough as she is, Marrow is lacking the one thing that everyone on the list before her has: experience. Yeah, she might get a couple of good licks in, but she's bound to pause and revel in her combat, leaving her back wide open. Or better yet, she'd provoke a fight with too many opponents at once. Either way, we see her coming on strong and then not having what it takes to break free from the Conan-esque fighting style of our seventh runner-up, wielding a fire extinguisher like a club…

TIME LASTING: 20 minutes

7 MARV

WHO? Sin City's resident bruiser and trouble magnet.

WHY'D HE MAKE THE LIST? He's Sin City's Superman. No, he doesn't have super-strength, X-ray vision or any of them spiffy powers. Nope, what Marv has are two things: stubbornness and big fists. This guy just will not quit. He's been thrown through windshields, shot, tossed out of moving cars, been shot again, knifed, punched…he's had everything but a piano land on him and it doesn't matter. This is one hunk of meat that just doesn't know when it's beat and will absolutely not stop until you're paste.

CLAIM TO SHAME: In the original *Sin City*, Marv fed one of the world's top assassins piece by piece to a rabid dog…while the guy was still alive. Ick.

WHY #7? Yeah, Marv's a bruiser, but he's a very *human* bruiser. While he'd break some bones and loosen some teeth, he'd eventually succumb to a superhuman fist, a stray ray blast or a sai sticking through his chest, which takes us to…

TIME LASTING: 35 minutes, 20 seconds

6 ELEKTRA

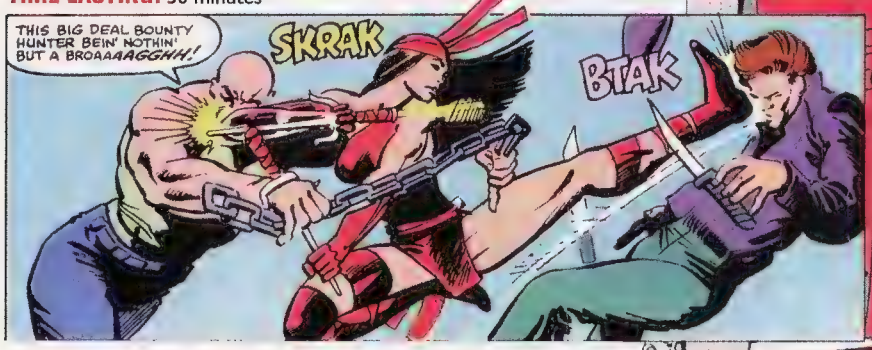
WHO? Elektra Natchios, the quasi-reformed sai-wielding ninja assassin who used to do the Kingpin's dirty work.

WHY'D SHE MAKE THE LIST? Because the Kingpin only hires the best. Renowned in the underworld as a killer martial artist and marksman, she's kicked the crap outta Daredevil and takes on the ninja guild The Hand for breakfast. You mess with her, you get a sai in your back.

CLAIM TO SHAME: In *Daredevil* #178, she broke into the Kingpin's skyscraper and killed an entire floor's worth of security just to prove she was worthy of being Kingpin's #1 assassin.

WHY #6? She was beaten by Bullseye. Sure, Bullseye's no slouch (see sidebar), but considering *he* was beaten by a couple of guys already on this list, her nasty-rating slips a notch. Yeah, her sneaky martial art techniques would take out the previously listed folk before they even knew what hit 'em. But up against an assassin who's been genetically engineered and trained since birth to be the ultimate fighting machine (see our #5 guy), Ms. Natchios goes down for the count.

TIME LASTING: 50 minutes



5 AZRAEL

WHO? Jean Paul Valley, a genetically-engineered dupe of the Order of St. Dumas, a secret organization that plots world domination. He was "programmed" with post-hypnotic mind conditioning since birth to be its unstoppable killing machine.

WHY'D HE MAKE THE LIST? He was the replacement Batman. When Bruce Wayne, the original Batman, was incapacitated at the hands of the villain Bane, he chose Azrael to pick up the mantle of the Bat. Why? 'Cause Bats knew what we know: that once Valley's assassin programming is turned "on," he doesn't turn off till the job's done. Regardless of what you do to him, no matter how bad you hurt him, Valley's deeply ingrained program and indomitable will keeps him on his feet until he's done what he has to do.

CLAIM TO SHAME: Beat the living crapola out of Bane, the man who broke Batman, in *Batman* #500.

WHY #5? As kick-ass as Azrael is, sometimes he gets too single-minded when he's "on." While he's held his own against multiple foes in the past, this brawl sees him tangling with the nine meanest thugs this side of Apokolips. (Heck, even *they've* got a guy in here!) While his robot-like programming would have him knocking heads like nobody's business, five hollow-tip rounds would find their way through his damaged armor, leading to our fourth man standing…

TIME LASTING: 1 hour

4 PUNISHER

WHO? Frank Castle, a Vietnam vet who's dedicated his life to executing criminals after his family was gunned down by the mob.

WHY'D HE MAKE THE LIST? He wants to die. As weird as that sounds, that gives him the edge in almost all of his battles. While those who face him may feel a twinge of fear during combat, Castle—deep inside—wants his personal war to be over. If he kills his opponent, great. One more sleazebag down. If he dies? Finally, he can be at peace. Combine that attitude with the fact he's always heavily armed and has years of combat experience, and you've got one of the most dangerous men in the Marvel Universe.

CLAIM TO SHAME: When doing time in Rykers Island during the first *Punisher* mini-series, he walked into a prison block unarmed and beat 10 thugs senseless.

WHY #4? He's still just a normal guy. While his skills, experience and penchant for the cheap shot would score victories over some of the lesser-powered types on this list, there just ain't all that much he's gonna do against the "supermen" of this rumble. Once he annoys one of the big boys enough, Frank'll finally get his death wish, and the son of Darkseid will be the last thing he sees.

TIME LASTING: 1 hour, 10 minutes

3 ORION

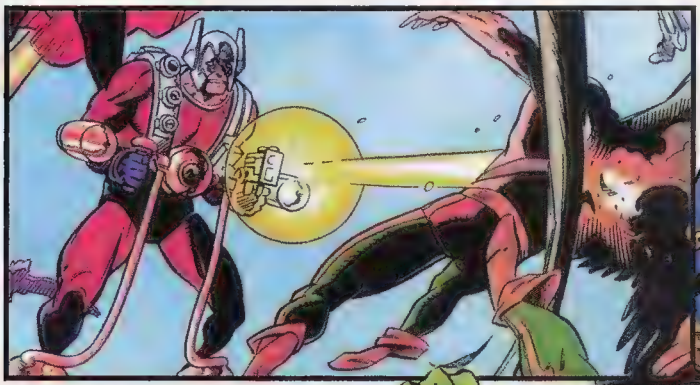
WHO? The berserker son of Darkseid, the "war dog" of New Genesis is ill-tempered and ready to rumble at the drop of a hat.

WHY'D HE MAKE THE LIST? This guy can go toe to toe with Superman. Blow for blow, Orion once matched the Man of Steel, proving that this war dog is one dude you don't wanna screw with. For all intents and purposes he's the living embodiment of warfare. It doesn't hurt that he's near-invulnerable, has super-strength and has zero compunction about killing anyone foolish enough to stand against him.

CLAIM TO SHAME: He destroyed an entire Thanagarian army in *Cosmic Odyssey* #3. Y'know, Thanagar, the alien race of warriors that Hawkman hailed from? Orion crushed them.

WHY #3? He thinks he's invincible. Which he's not. The pompous Orion would come close to cleaning house, but as the battle builds and he loses more and more of himself in his frenzy, he'd resort to trading blows with our #2 man on the list. And that, as anyone who's fought the Hulk knows, is a sure-fire way to lose.

TIME LASTING: 2 hours, 45 minutes



2 HULK

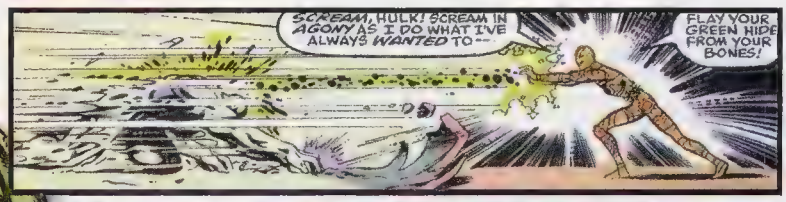
WHO? Caught in a gamma-bomb explosion, scientist Bruce Banner was transformed into a massive, near-invulnerable jade giant known as the Hulk.

WHY'D HE MAKE THE LIST? Caught in a gamma-bomb explosion, scientist Bruce Banner was transformed into a massive, near-invulnerable jade giant known as the Hulk.

CLAIM TO SHAME: Fought the Avengers and the FF—bent on bringing the Hulk in—and won. (If you have about 300 bucks to spend, pick up *Fantastic Four* #26 to see it.)

WHY #2? After taking out Orion, the Hulk would be on fire with rage and, after a pitched battle, succumb to the one man who can out-anger even the Hulk and, more importantly, someone who's a better fighter than him. Which brings us to our last man standing...

TIME LASTING: 3 hours



TSR, Inc.
Dept. M
PO Box 707
Renton, WA 98057-0707
email: feedback@tsr.com

A Message from the Creative Staff of TSR, Inc.

Dear Gamer,

Hey, listen up. This is serious. Wizards of the Coast acquired TSR last year. So what does this mean to you, the gamer? Everything.

Though much of what makes us TSR has remained the same (almost 50 members of our design, edit, graphics, art, and sales staff retained their positions in the company), there has been one fundamental change—the creative staff is once again the driving force behind our product lines. In our opinion, that's good for gaming, gamers, and TSR.

If you're a regular TSR customer, you've already noticed the differences. If you haven't picked up a TSR product in a while, flip through the newest titles at your favorite store. Look at the art, the graphics. Read a few paragraphs. Buy one and play it with your friends. We're excited by our renewed commitment and new directions, and we believe you will be, too.

We're completely devoted to producing the best game material in the industry and we're constantly striving to improve the quality of our products. But we need your help. We want your feedback and your suggestions—send them to either address listed above.

So, what can you expect to see in 1998? To be blunt, a lot.

Our AD&D® roleplaying lines are as strong as ever, and there are a variety of campaign lines to choose from. Watch for the long-awaited return of GREYHAWK® in May.

For storytelling fans, the critically acclaimed SAGA™ RPG adds the MARVEL SUPER HEROES® Adventure Game to a line-up that includes the DRAGONLANCE®: FIFTH AGE® Dramatic Adventure Game.

The new ALTERNITY® RPG debuts in April, presenting new rules for playing any kind of science fiction you can imagine. The STAR*DRIVE® campaign premieres in July, providing an edgy space opera setting for the line.

With DRAGON® and DUNGEON® magazines, the RPGA®, dice games, and TSR Books, it all adds up to a powerful and exciting year.

To further demonstrate our commitment, we've created the TSR Gold promotion. FREE items that are useful and fun appear each month from April to October at participating stores. Watch for specifics in ads that carry the TSR Gold logo, check out our web site at **www.tsr.com**, or ask your participating TSR Gold retailer for the latest information. Quantities are limited, though, so visit your store early and often each month to get in on the action.

It's the beginning of a new era at TSR. With loads of new product ideas, a long-standing commitment to quality and excellence, and your participation, we see great things ahead for the future of gaming.

– TSR Creative Staff

P.S. Make sure your retailer joins the TSR Gold promotion! Call Customer Service at **206-225-6500** for more information.

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BAD TO THE BONE

Now...what about that bar on the *other* side of town? Y'know, the dirtier, meaner, more dangerous dockside dive where the brawlers from the other side of the fence sit and eat beer nuts. Who are the Top 10 toughest super*villain* brawlers?

10) KILLER CROC
Born with a rare skin disease that gives him a scaly appearance, Croc combines his super-tough skin, almost inhuman strength and bestial savagery to tear his opponents apart. Literally.

9) DEADPOOL
One of Wolverine's replacements in the Weapon X program, Wade Wilson is an unstable assassin-for-hire who doesn't follow any of the rules and can regenerate any part of his body.

8) MR. HYDE
A chemist who created a "Jekyll and Hyde"-like formula, Calvin Zabo can transform himself into the towering, juggernaut known as Mr. Hyde...but with a twist: he keeps his intellect and his cunning, and gains bestial brutality.

7) BANE
The man who "broke" Batman, Bane is a self-taught master of punishment with an unmatched mind for cunning and deceit.

6) BULLSEYE
The ultimate weaponsmaster, the adamantium-spined Bullseye can turn any object—playing card, blow dryer, paper clip, whatever—into a lethal weapon.

5) TASKMASTER
Able to duplicate any non-superpowered feat he sees with his mutant photographic reflexes, the Taskmaster has the combined fighting prowess of Captain America, Hawkeye, Daredevil, Iron Fist, the Swordsman and dozens more.

4) KGBEAST
The anti-Batman, the 'Beast is a Russian agent who will stop at nothing to complete his objective (facing capture, the Beast cut off his own hand when it became entangled in a cable). That drive combined with his murderous fighting technique and cunning, strategic mind make the 'Beast one of the most underrated villains in all of comicdom.

3) SABRETOOTH
The evil Wolverine. That's Sabretooth in a nutshell. Inhumanly strong, mutant healing factor, berserker fighting style and an unquenchable thirst for blood. What the 'Tooth lacks in finesse he makes up for in sheer ferocity.

2) DEATHSTROKE
What if Captain America went bad? Similar to Cap in origin, the assassin Deathstroke is an ex-soldier, a product of a "secret soldier"-like serum and trained to never lose a battle. Having scored victories over Batman and the Teen Titans, Deathstroke has proven to be one of the most dangerous men in the DCU.

1) LOBO
After murdering the rest of his race, the ruthless bounty-hunter bastich known as Lobo has made a name for himself by...well, killing even more stuff. He's near-invulnerable, almost as strong as the Hulk, and so bad that when he died and went to Hell, the Devil resurrected him just to get away from him. That, and he's kicked Superman in the nuts. ■ *The* Wizard *staff*

1 WOLVERINE (with adamantium)

WHO? Whaddaya mean "who"? He's the mutant X-Man forever destined to battle his inner savage and be at peace with the "civilized" world.

WHY'D HE MAKE THE LIST? He has over a hundred years of battle experience, is trained in dozens of forms of combat, is almost superhumanly fast, possesses a mutant healing-factor that allows him to heal most wounds in seconds and is the proud owner of an unbreakable adamantium skeleton and razor-sharp retractable claws that can cut through anything.

CLAIM TO SHAME: Defeated—heck, almost *killed*—the Hulk in one of the coolest, goriest fights in all the Marvel Universe. (Check out *Incredible Hulk* #340, if you don't believe us.)

WHY #1? He's already beaten most of the people on this list and, truth be told, one of Wolvie's favorite ways to pass the evening is to go down to the local bar, get plastered on Pete's Wicked Ale and start a barroom brawl. He wouldn't just win this battle royal, he'd enjoy it.

TIME LASTING: 3 hours... just in time for last call. W

Much like the cowardly schoolgirls they are, the testosterone-challenged members of the Wizard *staff hide under the pool table whenever barroom brawls break out. And they watch "Party of Five."*

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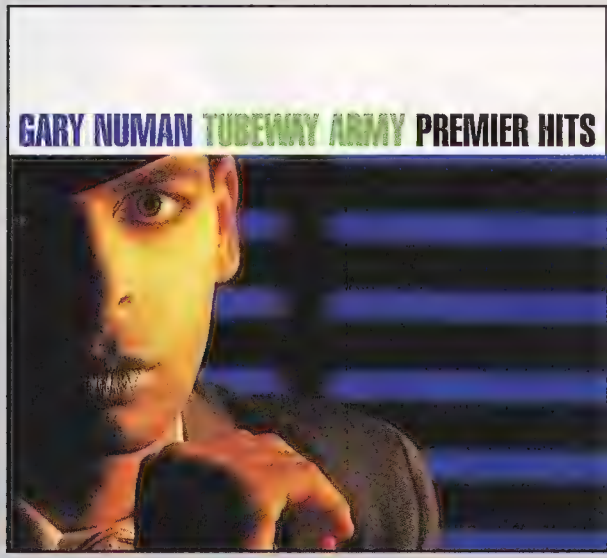

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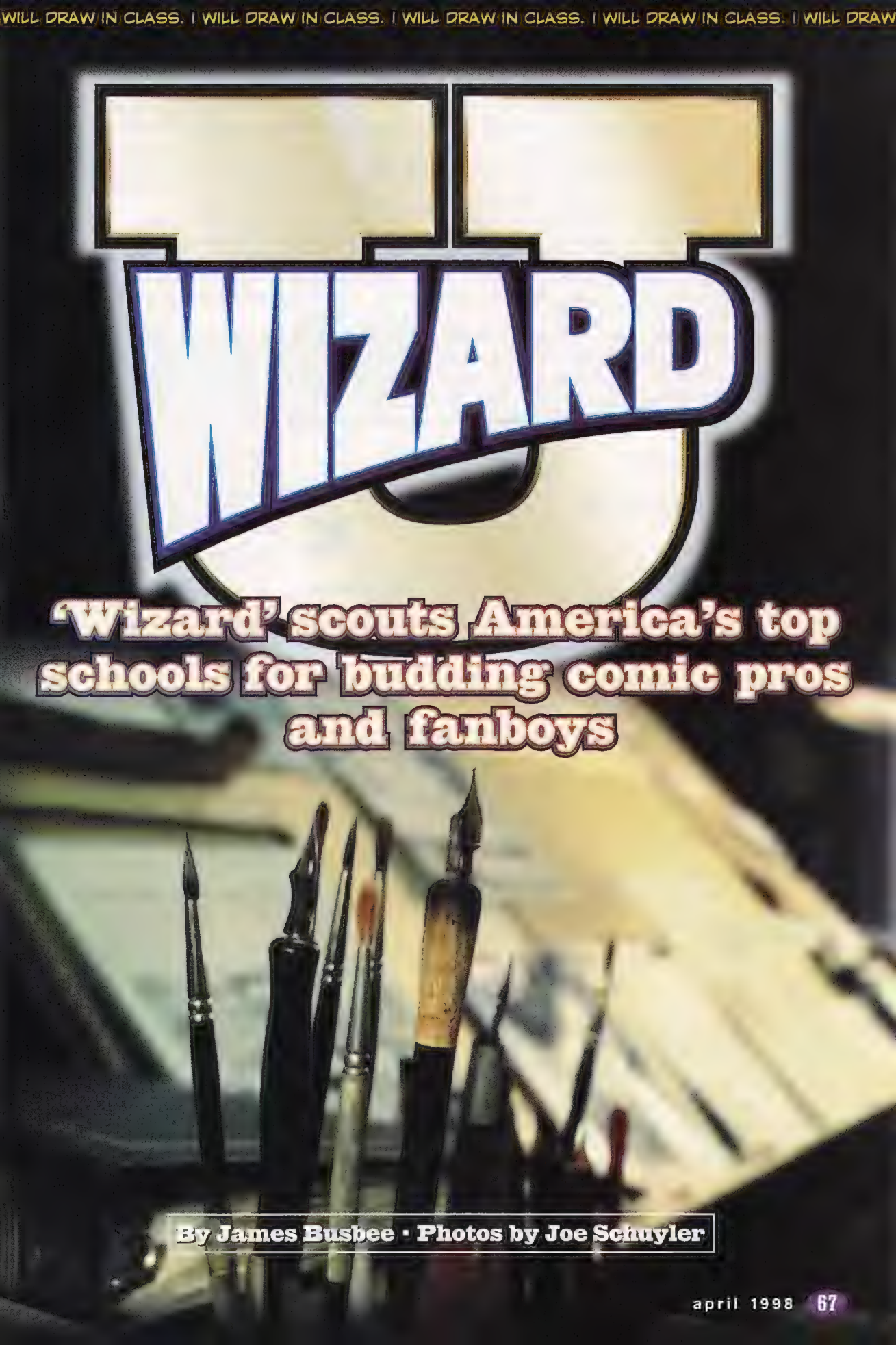
'Wizard' scouts America's top schools for budding comic pros and fanboys



By James Busbee · Photos by Joe Schuyler

Imagine, if you will, a college where your entire day revolves around comics. A college with classes like "Creating the Fight Scene," "The Splash Page" or "Lettering—Beyond BAM!" A college where *Superman* and *Wolverine* are required reading.

Well, guess what? Such colleges already exist, and they're turning out the next generation of comics artists by the truckload. Schools are realizing that sequential art is a valid art form to study. You can now major in comic book illustration, and graduate with both a real education and a fine portfolio.

For aspiring writers, the future looks equally bright. There are already literature classes focusing entirely on comic books, with test questions asking students to "compare and contrast the campy '60s Batman with his post-*Dark Knight* counterpart." Even more significantly, a number of literature classes feature comics such as *Maus*, *Sandman* and *Watchmen* alongside established classics. Slowly, academia is realizing that there's room for both Shakespeare and Spider-Man in the canon.

So to help you out, *Wizard* took to the college scene and compiled the ultimate guide of colleges that teach comic-related courses.

Now get into your study mode. A whole new world of learning awaits—and you can take your comics with ya!

NOTE: This list is as comprehensive as possible, but classes do change from semester to semester. In other words, don't choose a college just because you see a cool course here—it'd be a really good idea to call ahead first and get some more information.

ARIZONA

Maricopa County Community College

Address: Tempe, Arizona
Website: www.dist.maricopa.edu
Phone: (602) 517-8000
Course Info:
Art 956: Cartooning Methods
In this course, students learn how to make cartoons suitable for submission to publishers. The course starts at the beginning, documenting a history of cartooning and identifying a list of appropriate tools. From there, the course considers figure drawing and the clichés/stereotypes that can happen from lazy drawing. Final projects include drawing a page of sequential art and producing animation.

CALIFORNIA

University of California at Berkeley

Address: Berkeley, California
Website: www.berkeley.edu
Phone: (510) 642-3175
WACKY FACT: Berkeley was the home of the nation's longest-tenured professor—68 years. Prof. Joel Hillebrand taught chemistry from 1913 to 1981, when he retired at age 100.
Course Info:
Expert Reading and The Dynamics of Intertextual Literary Experience
"Intertextuality" is a fancy academic term referring to the interplay between various types of media, and how memories of a story in one medium can affect perceptions in another. The course uses McCloud's *Understanding Comics* as an introduction, and studies *The Dark Knight Returns* and *Maus* before moving on to Shakespeare's plays.

University of Southern California

Address: Los Angeles, California
Website: www.usc.edu
Phone: (213) 740-1111
Course Info:
Expository Writing 102
This introductory writing class helps students master the basics of expository and argumentative writing—but they get to use the *Batman: Contagion* trade paperback along the way. Cool!

CONNECTICUT

University of Connecticut

Address: Storrs, Connecticut
Website: www.uconn.edu
Phone: (860) 486-3137
Course Info:
English 217: The Graphic Novel
This course, one of the most popular at UConn, analyzes the very best sequential art—graphic novels—and shows how "kiddie books" can actually contain serious social and political messages. But then we already knew that, right? Texts discussed include *Maus*, Stephen Bissette's *Paleo-Pak* (three issues of *Tyrant*), Alan Moore's *From Hell*, Dave Sim's *Cerebus* and Neil Gaiman's *Sandman: A Doll's House*.

FLORIDA

University of Florida

Address: Gainesville, Florida
Website: www.ufl.edu
Phone: (352) 392-3261
Course Info:
English 1730: Comics As Literature
This is a killer course. It's an in-depth investigation of comics' past, present and future, with some analytical writing thrown in the mix. During the term, students learn about the major events in comic history as well as some of the key creative players in the comics world. Texts include the big guns: *Maus*, *Understanding Comics*, *Watchmen* and Joseph Witek's *Comics as History*.

ILLINOIS

Southern Illinois University

Address: Carbondale, Illinois
Website: www.siu.edu/cwis
Phone: (618) 536-4405
Course Info:
Sociology 306I: Popular Culture In Society
This course looks at how popular culture, including comics, movies, and TV shows, is a product which is "produced, distributed and consumed," according to the syllabus. The texts vary from semester to semester, but have included books such as *The Dark Knight Returns* and *The Death of Superman*.

INDIANA

Indiana University

Address: Bloomington, Indiana
Website: www.indiana.edu
Phone: (812) 855-0661
Course Info:
Art History 150: History of the Comic
A comprehensive look at comics, this course considers comic books and strips from an artistic, rather than a literary perspective. The course includes discussions of DC's Silver Age, the "Marvel Age" of the 1960s (introductions of the FF, Spider-Man, X-Men, etc.), modern reinterpretations of those heroes, the Comics Code and even the process behind producing a comic.

ICONS = = ART = FANBOY = WRITING

IF DUSK IS REALLY SPIDER-MAN,
THEN WHO'S PRODIGY?
Peter Parker, Spider-Man #92-93
Howard Mackie • John Romita Jr. • Scott Hanna
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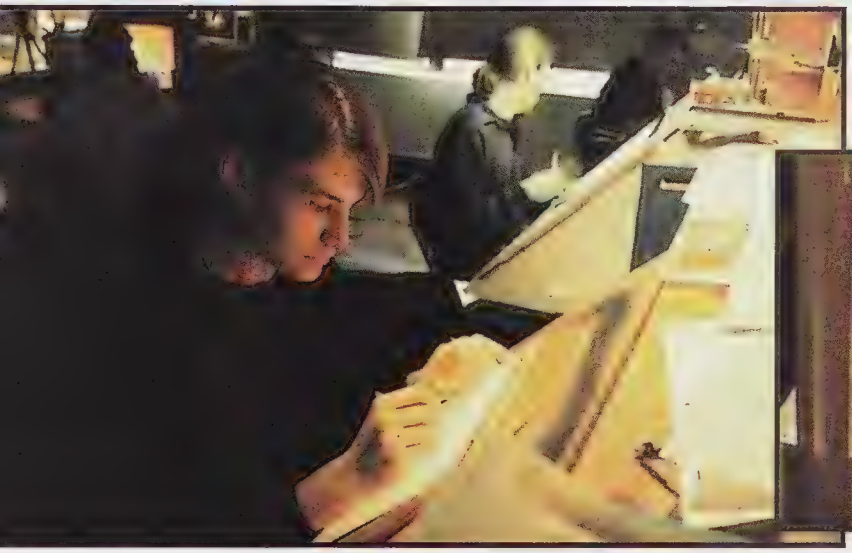

While it'll destroy your eyesight, endless hours at the drawing board will give your skin a nice healthy glow.

University of Notre Dame

Address: Notre Dame, Indiana
Website: www.nd.edu
Phone: (219) 239-7505

WACKY FACT: Football is king at Notre Dame. One of the school's most famous landmarks is "Touchdown Jesus," a mosaic on the side of a 12-story library that depicts Jesus with an arms-raised pose, as if signaling a touchdown.

Course Info:
English 109:17
Introduction to Literature
This is a standard introductory literary class with the basic writer's handbook, dictionary and thesaurus required. But tucked in the middle of the required textbooks is Moore and Gibbons' *Watchmen*, amid such classic writers as James Joyce and Thomas Pynchon.

IOWA

University of Iowa

Address: Iowa City, Iowa
Website: www.uiowa.edu
Phone: (319) 335-3847
Course Info:
English 8G:1 Interpretation of Literature
This course investigates the idea of "transgression"—the way that literature can open a reader's eyes to hidden or forbidden ideas. Texts used include *Maus* and *Stuck Rubber Baby*, Howard Cruse's semi-autobiographical tale of growing up as a gay white male in the civil rights-era South.

MASSACHUSETTS

Hampshire College

Address: Amherst, Massachusetts
Website: www.hampshire.edu
Phone: (413) 582-5471

WACKY FACT: Hampshire College has an experimental side—so experimental, in fact, that the class described here is taught by a student. It's part of a university-wide program allowing students to share their expertise with one another.

Course Info:
EPEC 90: Comic Books Students learn about the wonderful world of sequential art, then get their feet wet by drawing their own comic pages. Students' work is compiled into an end-of-semester anthology that's distributed campus-wide. The class' main text is McCloud's *Understanding Comics*. Also used are Will Eisner's *Comics and Sequential Art* and *Wizard*'s columns "Brutes and Babes" and "Basic Training." (Hey, we've gone legit!)

Mount Holyoke College

Address: South Hadley, Massachusetts
Website: www.mtholyoke.edu
Phone: (413) 538-2023

WACKY FACT: One of the college's most ghoulish traditions is Founder's Day, where everyone gets up at dawn and eats ice cream on the grave of the school's founder.

Course Info:
Comic Books: Art & Literature
Now this is a class! First, students learn about the art styles of Frank Miller, Jack Kirby, Will Eisner, Jim Lee, Todd McFarlane, John Byrne and Charles Schulz, among others. Next, it's writers, with a focus on Neil Gaiman, Todd McFarlane, Walter Simonson, Chris Claremont, Frank Miller, Grant Morrison, Howard Mackie and Chuck Dixon. The class concludes with a field trip to The Words and Pictures Museum of Fine Sequential Art in Northampton, Mass. While Holyoke is unfortunately an all-women's school, the professor of this course is trying to get this course into other schools in the area.

MICHIGAN

Michigan State University

Address: East Lansing, Michigan
Website: www.msu.edu
Phone: (517) 355-8332
Info:
Michigan State is home to the largest catalogued library collection of comic books in the United States, now estimated at over 80,000. Even so, the library believes

Pick the right class, and professionals like John Ostrander (*The Spectre*) could pop in and explain how to write comics—and what he's hiding in his left pocket.

Spectacular Spider-Man #257-258

J.M. DeMatteis • Luke Ross • Dan Green

MARVEL

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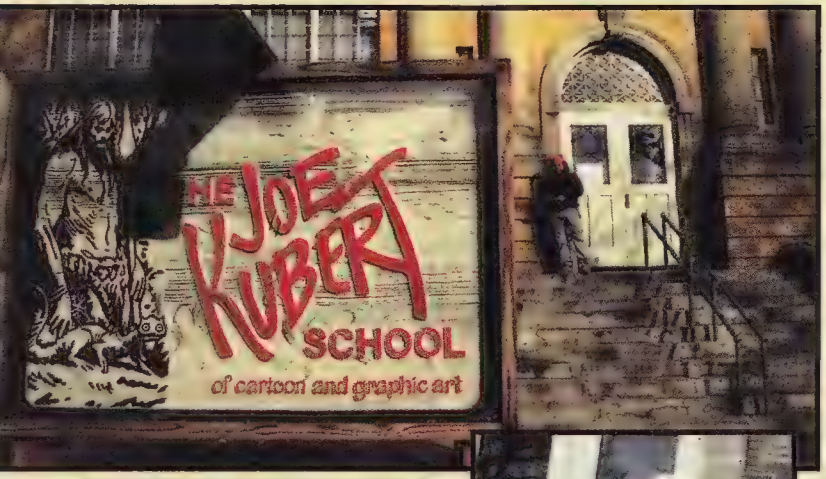


SPOTLIGHT ON:

The Joe Kubert School of Graphic Art and Design

This is the big one. The famous Kubert School, located in Dover, New Jersey, is the only college in the nation specifically devoted to preparing students to become comics professionals. Started in 1976 by Joe Kubert, famous for his work on DC's *Sgt. Rock* and *Flash*, the school takes in 110 students each year for an intensive three-year program. Yeah, it's a comics college, but this ain't a school for lazy fanboys. First off, tuition is over $10,000 a year, so you'd best be serious. (For one lucky and deserving student, Marvel offers a three-year scholarship.) The school only takes about one in six applicants. Coursework runs from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., and students are expected to draw for another eight hours a day. But it's not all comics boot camp—since everyone's as into comics as you are, you can always find someone after-hours to discuss whether Joe Madureira was the best or worst thing to happen to the X-Men. Plus, the professional connections are unparalleled. Artists such as Jim Balent (*Catwoman*), Stephen Bissette (*Swamp Thing*, *Tyrant*), Rick Veitch (*Rare Bit Fiends*), Tim Truman (*Jonah Hex* mini-series) and Tom Mandrake (*The Spectre*)—as well as Kubert's sons Adam and Andy—all cut their teeth at the Kubert School. After graduation, 90 percent of the school's students get jobs at companies ranging from Marvel and DC to Disney, Warner Brothers and greeting card companies.

For more information about the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art, call (201) 361-1327, or write to the school at 37 Myrtle Ave., Dover, NJ 07801.

it's only about halfway to its goal of having a copy of every single U.S. comic book ever published. Not restricted to superhero comics, the collection has detective, horror, "career girl" and "rich kid" comics, westerns and romances in its stacks. The collection also features microfilmed copies of hundreds of rare 1940s superhero comics.

University of Michigan

Address: Ann Arbor, Michigan
Website: www.umich.edu
Phone: (313) 764-7433

Course Info:
American Culture 206: Comic Books and American Culture
Another great course, this class discusses how comic books developed from, and also helped influence, American culture. The course treats comic books as serious literature, and analyzes them as such. Texts used in the class include *The Greatest Batman Stories Ever Told*, *Fantastic Four #1*, *Sandman: Preludes & Nocturnes*, *Watchmen* and *X-Men: X-Tinction Agenda*.

MINNESOTA

Minneapolis College of Art and Design

Address: Minneapolis, Minnesota
Website: www.mcad.edu
Phone: (800) 874-6223

Info:
Minneapolis offers an entire Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Cartooning/Comic Illustration. Woo-hoo! The four-year degree includes courses in Drawing, Animation, Comic Illustration and Art History. Coursework involves drawing fantasy, superhero and adult comics, and professional internships are a part of the degree.

University of Minnesota

Address: Minneapolis, Minnesota
Website: http://admissions.tc.umn.edu
Phone: (612) 625-2008
WACKY FACT: The world's first open-heart surgery was performed at the University of Minnesota in 1954 by Dr. Christiaan Barnard.

Course Info:
Art 144: Cartooning Workshop
This course focuses on cartoons in newspapers, magazines, comic books, advertising and greeting cards. The course begins with a history of cartooning, and then students work on techniques of character creation, panel layout, lettering and storytelling.

MISSISSIPPI

University of Mississippi

Address: Oxford, Mississippi
Website: www.olemiss.edu
Phone: (601) 232-5869
WACKY FACT: Ole Miss operates the nation's only legal marijuana farm, where the U.S. government grows marijuana for medical use by only a specific dozen patients.

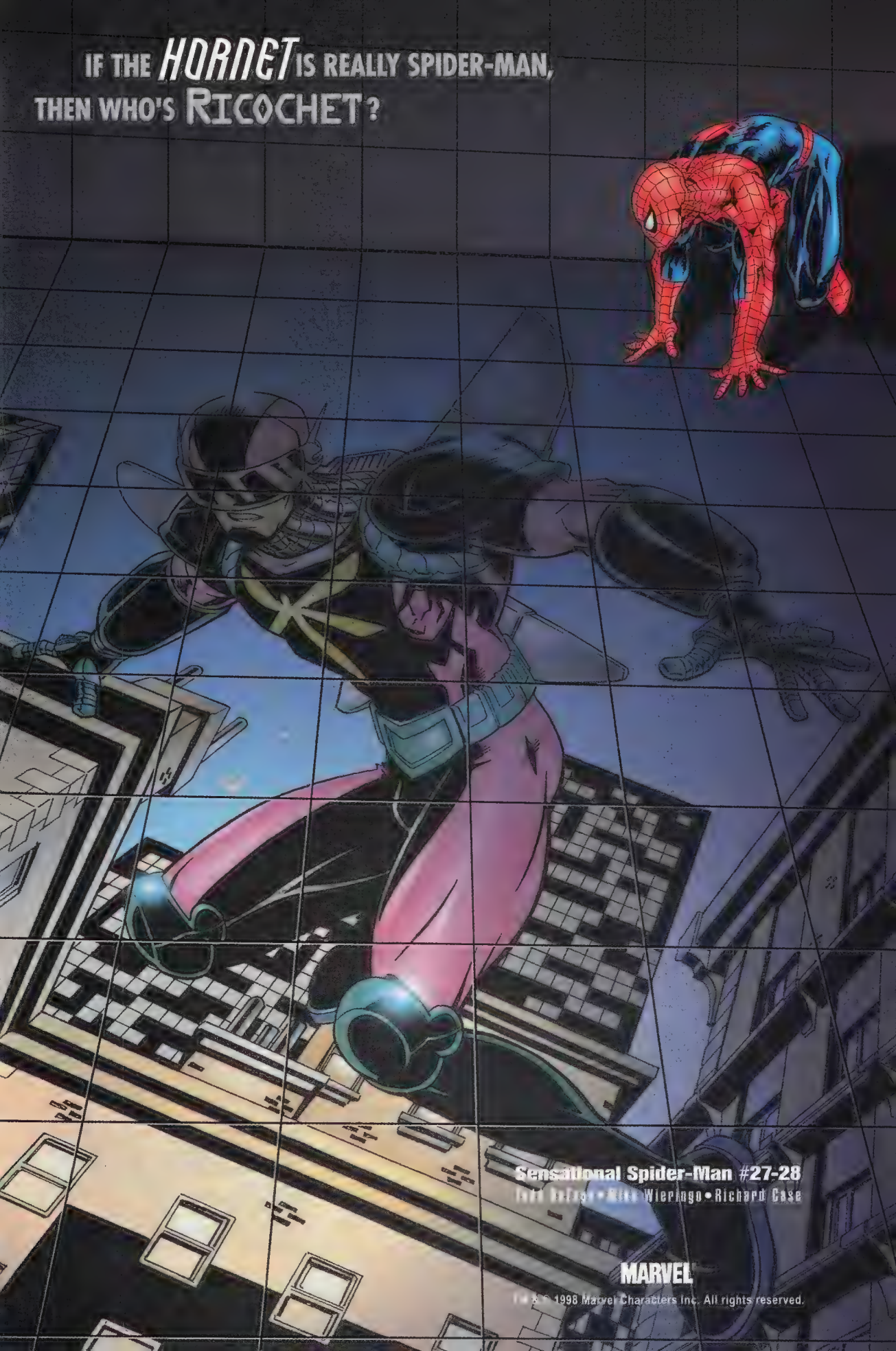
Course Info:
English 420: The Cyborg In Popular Media
In this class, students will investigate all aspects of the "cyborg"—part man, part machine. How does automation affect humanity, and vice versa? Texts and sources include the "RoboCop" and "Terminator" movies, as well as comic book portrayals of cyborgs in *Superman*, *Teen Titans* and *X-Men*.

NEW JERSEY

Rutgers University

Address: New Brunswick, New Jersey
Website: www.rutgers.edu
Phone: (732) 445-3770

Course Info:
English 195: World Mythology
This course considers myths and legends from all over the globe, from the Far East to classical Rome. Neil Gaiman's *Sandman: A Season of Mists* trade paperback is one of the integral (and most popular) texts in the course.


IF THE HORNET IS REALLY SPIDER-MAN,
THEN WHO'S RICOCHET?
Sensational Spider-Man #27-28
Richard Case
MARVEL
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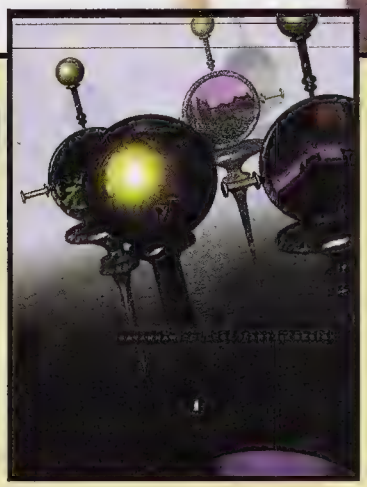
Photos courtesy of The Savannah College of Art and Design



SPOTLIGHT ON:

The Savannah College of Art and Design

SCAD, located in Savannah, Georgia, is the only college in the nation that offers entire courses of graduate and undergraduate study in Sequential Art—that's "drawing comics" to you and me. The program requires both strong drawing and storytelling skills. Students in the program learn techniques of writing, penciling, inking and computer coloring. Graduate-level students must develop their own style in preparation for a job in the comics industry, and an internship in the field is required. Classes offered include studies of alternative comics, painting for comics and creating cover art. Recent guest speakers at SCAD have included Klaus Janson, David Mazzucchelli, P. Craig Russell, and Maurice Sendak (creator of *Where the Wild Things Are*). Students at the school have an active extracurricular interests, ranging from small-press comics to job-search aids. The city of Savannah, site of the book and movie "Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil," has a lively artistic contingent as well.

For more information, contact the Savannah College of Art & Design at (912) 238-2483 or visit their Website at www.scad.edu.

NEW YORK

Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art

Address: New York, New York
Website: www.cooper.edu
Phone: (212) 353-4120

WACKY FACT: The last time a student refused admission after acceptance to Cooper Union's architecture school was in 1879.

Info:
Cooper Union is as notable for the sheer rigor of its academic existence as for its programs. When you get through Cooper Union, you're ready for more than Marvel—you're ready for the Marines. The school offers an intensive fine arts/illustration program, which stresses both academic knowledge and practical experience. There are perks, though, starting with the tuition: a big fat zero. That's right—if you're good enough to make it into Cooper Union, they'll pick up your tuition tab!

Fashion Institute of Technology

Address: New York, New York
Website: www.fitnyc.edu
Phone: (800) GO-TO-FIT

Info:
FIT's no beauty school. *Shi* creator Billy Tucci went here, and the school has programs in everything from textile use to toy design. It offers a two-year associate degree in fine arts. The first year mostly covers the basics of art and illustration. Once you reach the second year, you'll spend most of your time in a studio honing your chosen craft.

New York University

Address: New York, New York
Website: www.nyu.edu
Phone: (212) 998-4500

Course Info:
History of Genres II: Exploding Genres
This course covers various texts which cross genre lines—for example, the political theory in a "superhero" book like *Watchmen*, or the painful history in a "comic" such as *Maus*. Included as part of the course are several movies and television shows: Star Trek's Borg episodes, Star Wars and "Babylon 5" are integral parts of the class.

School of Visual Arts

Address: New York, New York
Website: www.schoolofvisualarts.edu
Phone: (212) 592-2100

Info:
The School of Visual Arts offers a four-year degree in Illustration and Cartooning. After getting initial coursework out of the way, students can take classes in the Art of Comics, the Graphic Novel and Writing for Comics, in addition to workshop classes in sequential art. The program also offers some good background courses to give budding artists a broader frame of reference than comics, including photography, sculpture, art history and media communications.

OHIO

Wright State University

Address: Dayton, Ohio
Website: www.pogo.wright.edu
Phone: (513) 873-5700

Course Info:
English 251: Study of Literature II
Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* and classics such as Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness* are used to teach students basic writing and analytical skills. A companion anthology by Pearson and Uricchio titled *The Many Lives of the Batman* includes essays with titles such as "Holy Commodity Fetish, Batman!" and "Same Bat Channel, Different Bat Times: Mass Culture and Popular Memory."

Learn new perspectives in life and comics. For instance, why do these guys look 78 feet tall?

IF RICOCHET IS REALLY SPIDER-MAN,
THEN WHO'S DUSK?
Amazing Spider-Man #434-435
Tom DeFalco • Joe Bennett • Bud LaRosa
MARVEL
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SCHOOL BOOKS

Interested in studying comics, but can't find anything at your local university? Don't panic. Most colleges offer independent studies, in which you can set up your own course and select your own reading list. Here's a handy list of the most popular comics being studied in classrooms today:

Batman: The Dark Knight Returns (DC Comics)

By Frank Miller with Klaus Janson and Lynn Varley

Miller's dark and gothic Bat-tale, used in English and criminology classes across the country, examines the divergence of law (represented by Superman) from justice (personified by the Batman).

Kingdom Come

(DC Comics)

By Mark Waid and Alex Ross

The religious, moral and ethical dimensions of *Kingdom Come* have pushed it into English classes nationwide. As the reluctant hero whose very presence in battle determines the outcome of a war, Superman rises to mythological dimensions.

Maus I and II

(Pantheon Books)

By Art Spiegelman

Maus is the story of World War II as seen through the eyes of a Polish Jew who survived the war. The Jews are mice, the Nazis are cats and the sheer horror of the war is evident on every page of this classic now taught in English, religion and history departments, as well as in holocaust literature classes nationwide.

Sandman (DC Comics)

By Neil Gaiman and various artists

Gaiman's 75-issue run of *Sandman*, collected in several trade paperbacks and used in progressive literature and mythology course, weaves historical fact with the mythology of a dozen cultures, and William Shakespeare keeps showing up.

Understanding Comics (Kitchen Sink Press)

By Scott McCloud

A textbook in comic book format, *Understanding Comics* is used in courses ranging from Comics Appreciation to Multimedia Web Page Design. McCloud starts with the basic elements of comics (the word balloon, facial expressions) and moves to the complex (the progression of time in a comic panel).

Watchmen (DC Comics)

By Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons

Watchmen combines 1950s-style political paranoia with a growing dread of technology. Moore's portrait of a society numbed into doomed submission by a relentless, manipulated media is studied in a variety of English classes around the country. ■ *JB*

Whether you've got a beard or not, there'll be plenty of people to help critique your work and tell you what you're doing wrong.

PENNSYLVANIA

University of Pennsylvania

Address: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Website: www.upenn.edu

Phone: (215) 898-7507

Course Info:

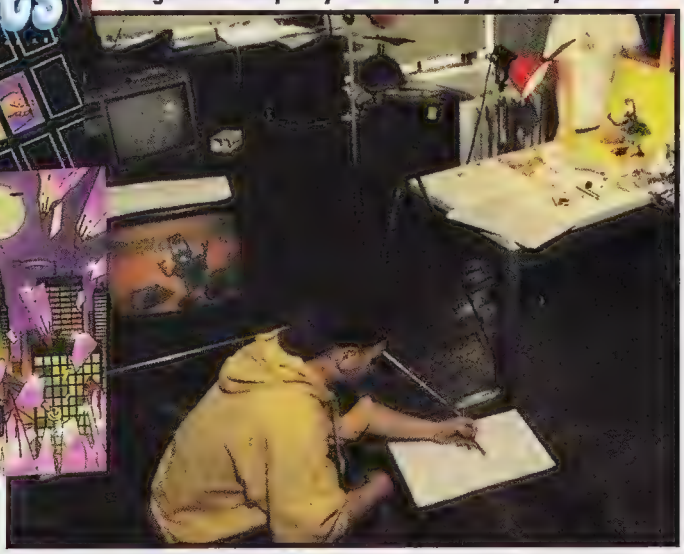
English 3.305: Writing, Power and Social Change

This course explores the way in which writing possesses the power to affect or reflect the society around it. Texts used include McCloud's *Understanding Comics* and Spiegelman's *Maus* I and II.

Linguistics 057: Language and Popular Culture

Klingons in college! In this class, students examine the many forms of human and alien language as presented in popular media. Languages studied include Klingon (no joke), and course assignments include considering the ways in which comic books recreate the human language. For example: is there a difference between "AGH!" and "ARGH!"?

***Wizard* College Tip #32: Animation courses have their perks. You get to watch plenty o' TV and play with clay. Woo hoo!**



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BE FOUR DIFFERENT HEROES
BEFORE THE WALLS START CLOSING IN?
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www.marvel.com or AOL at keyword: marvel

ON YOUR OWN...?

So you wanna be in comics, but aren't much for book learnin'? No prob. Just flip on your computer and jack in—the Internet's full of resources for aspiring writers and artists.

Cartoonists' Fountain of Knowledge

A monstrous site of information for artists of all stripes. Includes both aesthetic and practical (rates to charge, submission procedures) information.

www.spirit.com.au/~pat/fountain.html

The Comic Book Writer's Guide to Information on the Internet

A page of links to help the aspiring writer and the old pro alike with some of the specifics of storytelling. The page includes links to science, weaponry, aviation, law, police and finance sites.

members.aol.com/jayjay5000/WritersGuide.index.html

Dega Studios' Creating Comics Links Page

A monstrous page of links for virtually every aspect of creating comics, this page is updated regularly. It includes links to the submission guidelines of dozens of companies. It's an invaluable resource.

www.cadvision.com/dega/creating.html

Don Simpson's College of Cartooning Knowledge

Don Simpson (*Megaton Man*) created this site as an online equivalent to a class he taught at Allegheny County Community College in Pennsylvania. It's a comprehensive look at how to put together a comic book, starting with figure drawing and working up to inking and coloring.

http://fiasco.telerama.com/cartoon/cart.html

Marc Fleury's Writing for Comics

A resource specifically devoted to writers, featuring essays and samples of scriptwriting, panel layout instructions, submission tips and legal advice.

www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/9925

Xeric Foundation

Xeric is an organization set up to assist comic creators in self-publishing efforts. The foundation offers grants of up to $5,000 to aid in printing and distribution of small-run comics.

www.artcomic.com/xeric.html ■ *JB*

TENNESSEE

University of Tennessee

Address: Knoxville, Tennessee
Website: www.utk.edu
Phone: (423) 974-2184
Course Info:

Cartooning I and II: Basic and Advanced
In these courses, students learn the basics of figure drawing and graphic storytelling. In the second class, students learn how to develop an individual style, and the class draws heavily on the use of editorial cartoons, newspaper strips, and comic books.

TEXAS

Baylor University

Address: Waco, Texas
Website: www.baylor.edu
Phone: (800) BAYLOR-U
Course Info:

Communication 1305: Intro to Electronic and Film Media This course helps students understand and appreciate the ways in which mass media and electronic media work in America. One of the major projects in class involves a study of comic books and the creation of storyboards and other narrative art. Resources used include the series *Fax from Sarajevo*, *Generation X* and *Spider-Man*, and the Websites for Dark Horse Comics and DC Comics. **W**

Hey, how do you expect to pass if all you do is read silly captions? Go do some homework, slacker.

James Busbee, who now teaches English at the University of Memphis, plans to show this article to his parents and try to convince them one more time that all those X-Men and Teen Titans *comics he read weren't a waste of time, but a legitimate form of social and political discourse. Or something like that.*

GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Still waiting for a rich relative to kick off? Relax—there are better ways to pay for college. Check with your individual schools or home states to see what sort of financial assistance they can give you. Then check these scholarship sites. At each one, you can enter your specific demographic information (gender, race, intended major, etc.) and receive a list of scholarships for which you might qualify.

- College Edge **www.collegeedge.com/FA/**
- College Wizard (no relation to you-know-who) **www.collegewizard.com**
- Get Into Any College: Secrets of Harvard Students **www.101online.com/scholarships.html/**
- United Scholarships of America **www.globalweb.com/usa/**
- Windfalls **www.windfalls.com/grants.shtml** ■ *JB*

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3 Mega Chromium® Cards Per Pack, 24 Packs per Box, 12 Boxes per Case

The New Era Begins February 1998

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Divine Right: The Adventures of Max Faraday is fast becoming Jim Lee's greatest comic book achievement. So it's pretty safe to say it won't take an act of God to get you wanting this exclusive comic brought to you by WildStorm and Wizard Entertainment. And the best part is, all you need to do to get yourself one of these is fill out that fancy order form, stuff in three almighty dollars and snail-mail it all on in!

Within the *Divine Right* #1/2, you'll find these goodies:

- **A brand-new story drawn by Jim Lee!**
- **The *Divine Right* sketchbook! Featuring a behind-the-scenes look at Jim Lee's fantastic work on this #1/2 issue.**
- **Brand new biographies for all those characters you've been wondering about!**
- **"Divine Revelations"—backstory information on the *Divine Right* mythos!**
- **And the most magical morsel of all—this is a *Divine Right* story you won't find anywhere else! This exclusive comic is only available through this one-time *Wizard* offer!**

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The Word of God

No reproductions of this coupon will be accepted. This coupon must be sent in the accompanying envelope, one coupon per comic. You may put additional coupons in the same envelope. Remit by check or money order only. Canadian orders remit $4.00, other foreign orders remit $6.00. All payment must be in U.S. funds drawn on a U.S. bank. Make all checks payable to Wizard Entertainment. Offer good only while supply lasts. Please allow eight to 12 weeks for delivery. Changes of address will not be forwarded unless Wizard Entertainment is notified in writing by May 13, 1998.

THIS OFFER EXPIRES MAY 13, 1998.

THE WIZARD Q&A:

Kevin Smith

After proving himself as a successful Hollywood director, KEVIN SMITH zooms in on his first love: the world of comics

By Scott Brick • Photos by Craig Blankenhorn

Smith admits he's "a big DC guy," but that's not stopping him from possibly writing Marvel's *Daredevil*.

Just as Kevin Smith is explaining why Warner Bros. isn't using his "Superman Lives" movie script, the phone rings. Stopping mid-anecdote, Smith shakes his head and mutters, "It's crazy today, man."

No matter where he turns, there's something that needs Smith's attention, *immediately*. First off, he's got a major motion picture, "Dogma," about to go into production. Next, there's the scripts for his upcoming comic books from Oni Press, not to mention the screenplay for "Fletch 3." And when all that gets taken care of, there's the shipping details for the comic book store he owns. At the moment, however, he's just sitting on the floor of his apartment, flagging calls from his casting agent, trying to sort through actors for the MTV commercials he's scheduled to shoot next weekend. "I don't know...Jerry Orbach? Hmmm..." Hanging up, Smith takes a drag from his ever-present cigarette, then smiles as he says, "It's crazy, but I'm not complaining, man; I love it."

It's this uncanny, some might even say *superhuman* ability to juggle multiple projects that's transformed Kevin Smith into such a hot commodity. When "Clerks" made him the hottest independent film director around, Smith went on to make two follow-up movies about comic books, and their fans and creators. After writing the first draft of "Superman Lives," the comic industry took notice of how seamlessly he blended the worlds of comics and film, prompting both Marvel and DC to discuss hiring Smith to write some of their high-profile characters. Now, with two of his own titles, *Clerks* and *Bluntman & Chronic*, coming out from Oni Press, and maybe Marvel's *Daredevil* on the horizon, Smith has fulfilled several childhood dreams at once: He'll actually be able to buy comic books written by him from his very own comic book store.

"I've lived the ultimate fanboy's life," says Smith. "To cross between both worlds and work in the medium that you love, then to be working in a new medium that you love too, love even *more* to some degree, it's pretty damn thrilling."

Can that be right? Does this famous movie director mean to say he loves comics even more than film? Better believe it. Smith's spacious apartment in Red Bank, N.J., is a shrine to comics. Original art hangs everywhere. Superhero statues line every shelf. The Batman helmet Smith's character, Silent Bob, wore in his second film "Mallrats" sits next to a huge stack of graphic novels. Videos, collector plates, posters...even his ashtray, filled to bursting with dead Marlboro Light Menthols, has Felix the Cat on it.

In a humble and reverent voice, between phone calls and cigarettes, Smith sits down to explain just what he plans to accomplish in the comic book industry, and how he's fulfilled his fanboy fantasy.

VITAL STATS

NAME: Kevin Patrick Smith
BORN: August 2, 1970, in Red Bank, N.J.
CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: His first film, "Clerks," won the Filmmaker's Trophy at the 1994 Sundance Film Festival. Has since written and directed "Mallrats," "Chasing Amy" and the upcoming "Dogma." He was tapped to write the upcoming "Superman Lives," but his script will not be used.
FAVORITE RUN IN COMICS HISTORY: "Alan Moore's run on *Swamp Thing*. Everything was top-notch, always really thought out, always just brilliant, brilliant writing. That was the first book that I didn't feel like, 'I'm reading comics, I better keep this quiet.'"

WIZARD: What happened with the script for *Superman Lives*?
SMITH: I believe they've hired another writer to rewrite it, but I don't know if he's rewriting my draft or if he's rewriting the draft of Wesley Strick, who rewrote my draft. But what I do know is, I was contracted for two drafts, I did them, Tim Burton came on and as soon as he signed his contract, he turned around and told the studio, "I'm going to go another way, I'm going to do my own version of Superman."

By this point, Tim is pay or play, so what are you going to do? Fire the guy who made you a billion dollars, or fire the guy who made "Clerks"?

I keep getting assured by some execs at the studio that they're fighting to keep as much of my stuff in there as possible. But I had spent my time like I was contracted for, and then I was off. It's not like I was fired or anything. I was happy to do it, I got great exposure, I got paid a lot of money. But as long as somebody does it right, that's fine.

Have you heard about what Tim Burton wants to do?
The stuff I heard is just so far from the beaten path. It's just loopy. You start hearing reports that Tim Allen's gonna play Brainiac? I didn't write Brainiac for Tim Allen, I know that much. I wrote it with Patrick Stewart in mind or somebody like that. So to hear that, clearly he's going another way. They're going to do what they're going to do, but hopefully they've learned you don't want a jokey superhero movie, you don't want camp in this day and age. People want to see good stuff, serious stuff.

What do you think of Nicolas Cage as Superman?
Some people were all up in arms about Nick Cage. I think Nick Cage is a really great actor. He could make you forget he doesn't look like the classic Superman. At the same time, he bulked up real big for "Con Air," so it's obvious he could carry it physically. They had been talking about Nick Cage for Brainiac at one point, and I was like, "Nick Cage could play Superman."

If you want to go with a name, go with someone like Nick Cage, someone who can really act, who'd take an approach to the character that perhaps hasn't been taken before. It won't be all about the heroics; it'll be a human character again, because that's who Superman is. Superman's a guy who's from this other planet; he's got these incredible powers, but at the same time he just wants to fit in.

If you could do one comic book movie right now, what would it be?
I recently had a conversation with Warner Bros. where they asked if I would be interested in doing "Green Lantern," the Hal Jordan version. I don't know if they could ever push that through, but the studio has now shown interest in it.

For me, I would like to see a movie based on the DC comic *The Question*. What a great book that was. Denny O'Neil and Denys Cowan were doing the book, and God, what a great book it was! And very easy to do! It mixes a comic book superhero, inasmuch as he gets to wear a mask, with a very *film-noir*ish background. Hub City is basically like Sin City; it really lends itself to a low-budget but decent comic book flick.

On the larger scale, *Mage* would make a great, great comic book movie. *Mage* could be "Star Wars," it's that huge and mythical and wonderful. Of course, *Grendel*, for another smaller flick that's definitely comic book-oriented but more moody than slam-bang. It's a film about an assassin, fer God's sake! *Green Arrow*, I think, would make a decent flick too, in the right hands. I'm more interested in smaller films. Smaller, more personal, somewhat more realistic films.

The Question "lends itself to a decent comic book flick," says Smith.

Why is it Marvel can't make a great film?
That's puzzling to me, because I think Marvel has the most film-friendly franchises in terms of characters and books, moreso than DC. Superman and Batman turned into decent movies, but you would imagine Spider-Man would be a great movie—it's real cinematic, it's real sci-fi, it's real action-filled. The X-Men, Avengers...throw a rock and you'll hit a character that'll easily translate to the screen.

Also, Superman is the strange visitor from another planet, but

that's not nearly as believable as the guy who gets bitten by the radioactive spider, to some degree. You'd imagine a Marvel film would've happened long before [a DC one], but Marvel just hasn't been able to pull together. It's just made some poor choices. Giving out the license to Fantastic Four, one of Marvel's most popular titles, to a company who was making it for a million bucks? What are you, high? Do you need the money that badly that you'd let that movie out there? You can't blame the filmmakers, they had a million bucks!

"The Punisher" went straight to video. "Captain America" is another movie where you're just like, "Why did you give out the license? Why is the Red Skull speaking with an Italian accent rather than German?" And why not a major studio?

But now Marvel seems to be getting on track. Bryan Singer's going to direct "X-Men" at 20th Century Fox; that makes sense. And if they can ever get the Spider-Man rights figured out, Jim Cameron's waiting to do it, and you can't ask for a better director.

There's been an Internet rumor that you're going to write Marvel's *Daredevil* comic. Any truth to it?

Well, I know [comic creators] Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti really well, and they're working on getting a few books from Marvel and taking them under their Event Comics wing. They don't intend to reinvent the characters; they plan on staying with continuity. One of the books considered is *Daredevil*. Joe knew I was a big Daredevil fan; I loved [writer/artist] Frank Miller's stuff on *Daredevil*. So Joe asked, "Are you interested?" Of course, I have a lot of interest. Will it happen? I hope so; it's looking good. I'm trying to work out a 12-issue storyline and sign on for that long, and if I can't stretch it for 12, I'll definitely do a six-issue storyline. But I think if all goes well, it looks like I'll be doing it.

SUPERMAN LIVES

Here's a breakdown of Kevin Smith's original script for "Superman Lives," loosely based on the comics' "Death of Superman" storyline.

THE DRAMATIC OPENING: Lex Luthor places an intergalactic distress call, asking any hostile sentient creatures to help him eradicate a certain "Kryptonian menace." Answering the call, Brainiac arrives on Earth and the two hatch their plot.

THE MOTIVE: Luthor just wants Supes dead. Brainiac is most interested in a Kryptonian Artificial Intelligence called The Eradicator, a morphing supercomputer which can perpetually power his alien body. And any significant drop in Superman's vital signs would "wake up" the Eradicator's systems.

SURPRISE PLOT TWIST: Brainiac and Luthor create the Shadowcaster, a series of satellites that effectively block out the sun–the source of Superman's powers. In order to destroy Superman in his weakened condition, Brainiac unleashes a specimen from his alien menagerie–Doomsday, an all-powerful behemoth that succeeds in destroying Superman.

NON-SURPRISE PLOT TWIST #1: Superman bites it.

THE SURPRISE CAMEO: Batman appears at Superman's funeral.

NON-SURPRISE PLOT TWIST #2: Supes is revived by the awakened Eradicator using Kryptonian technology, then morphs into a metallic suit that duplicates most of Superman's powers. (With the Earth in perpetual darkness, he's still powerless, after all.) Wearing the suit, Superman returns to face Luthor and Brainiac.

THE CLIMAX: During the final confrontation, the Eradicator sacrifices itself to destroy the Shadowcaster, returning Superman's powers in time for him to defeat Luthor and literally destroy Brainiac with his bare hands. ■ *SB & the Wizard staff*

Is *Daredevil* a dream project of yours?

Geez, it's a toss-up. I think *Daredevil*'s one of the top three books that if I could've got a shot at I would've done, and that's only because of what Frank Miller did. He made that an amazing book for a long time, really opened up that character and did great things with him. You read that and you don't want to surpass that, you just want to be part of that club. I don't want to go on the book and reinvent this character—I just wanna do what Frank Miller did! I just want to keep up with that standard.

Batman's a book I would love to write. Batman and Daredevil aren't that far removed from one another, to some degree. The characters are close, inasmuch as they're not very superpowered, they're normal guys. Yes, Matt has the

◀ "Let me bring back Ollie Queen and I swear I'll double your sales, I swear I'll bring that book up."

—Smith on writing *Green Arrow*

Out of desperation, Smith—an admitted "register jockey"—bought his own comic store.

heightened senses, but they're the characters you read where, as ridiculous as it may seem sometimes, "This could happen."

The other book I always thought, man, I'd really love to get on that book was *Green Arrow*. I remember at one point I sat down with [*Green Arrow* editor] Darren Vincenzo for a couple minutes and I told him I'd love to do it. I wouldn't want to steal it away from [current *Green Arrow* writer] Chuck Dixon, of course, but I told him any time Chuck's uninterested, tap me and let me bring back Ollie Queen. I would kick ass with the book. I told Darren, "Let me bring Ollie back and I swear I'll double your sales, I swear I'll bring that book up." I have a feeling that if this *Daredevil* thing happens, it would go a long way toward that.

What are your favorite comics to read?

I'm a big DC guy. A lot of people assume from "Mallrats" that I'm a big Marvel guy, but there's very little Marvel I can actually get into. Everything DC puts out, I'll pretty much give a read. Then there's a slew of independent books that I'll read. I'm a big *Hate* fan. I'll pretty much pick up anything at least once, but DC is the stuff that I spend most of my time on.

It must be convenient to have your own comic store. How'd that come about?

It was originally a store called Comicology; we bought our comics there the last three or four years. One day the guy who ran the place came into the office and said, "I'm moving to Taiwan." I was like, "What the hell are we gonna do? Where're we gonna get our comics?" But he said, "Well, I was thinking maybe you'd want to take the store over." And I'd always planned one day, maybe when I was burned out and had no more stories to tell, I'd just kick back and run a comic book store. So I bought it, revamped it, and turned it into The Secret Stash, and it was quite nice.

I'm pretty much there at least once or twice a day. Some days I'll just sit there and spend the whole day; some days it's just nice to sit and work the register, just doing that register jockey thing, and organizing it, designing what the place looks like, then going out looking for toys and stuff like that. It keeps your finger on the pulse, too; you really learn what's moving, what's not moving, what people are interested in, what they're not interested in.

You're living the fanboy's fantasy–you make movies, write comics and own your own comic shop. What's next for Kevin Smith?

Geez, what's left, right? Yes, there is one more thing left before it's all complete, and that's action figures. As soon as they do the Jay and Silent Bob action figures, then I know I'm fulfilled, I've lived the ultimate fanboy's life. Once they make the action figures I can pretty much drop dead. [*Laughs*] But if that day never comes, I can't complain; this is pretty much as good as it gets. W

California-based freelancer Scott Brick wonders what action accessory the Bluntman figure would come with.

KEVIN CAN'T WAIT

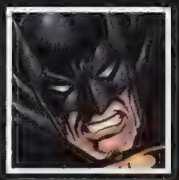
Kevin Smith's got plenty of ideas for how he'd translate today's most popular comics into kick-ass films. Here's a few...

SPIDER-MAN–"I'd leave out Mary Jane so we can concentrate on him, his antics, his adventure. Mary Jane's a great character, but in two hours? To involve Peter Parker's love life? Besides, in the first one you'd be dealing with Gwen Stacy..."

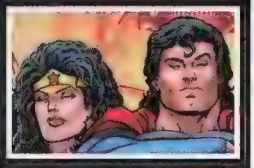
X-MEN–"I'd simplify it and keep it to year one, deal with the original team. I know everybody is like, if they're gonna do an X-Men movie they'd need Wolvie, but let's keep it simple, start from the origin."

SPAWN 2–"I'd concentrate less on the special effects and concentrate more on his story. Effects help a movie like that, but you need a strong story."

BATMAN 5–"I'd start studying the lead character, spend some time with him, period. Let's talk about Bruce Wayne and not these contrived, Bruce-angst things from 'Batman Forever.' He meets Chase Meridian and is like, 'I'm shutting it all down, Alfred–no more Batman'? What are you, high? Batman's thirst for justice doesn't allow for that."



IRON MAN–"I'd concentrate on him being an alcoholic as well as the superheroics. To have a superhero that has a handicap of some sort would be interesting, and alcoholism would be a great one."



JLA–"I'd just beg Grant Morrison to do the job."

DAREDEVIL–"I'd have a real long conversation with Frank Miller, see what he thought, then I'd do that, with a bit of my stuff thrown in. I wouldn't work with Elektra, not right away, but I'd definitely play around with Bullseye."

HOT STUFF, THE LITTLE DEVIL–"I'd engage Hot Stuff in a war with Morningstar and Lucifer, in a battle for Hell's helmet. That'd be good, right? This dude in diapers, just flat out trying to rule the underworld. That would be hot." ■ *SB*

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As a special bonus feature, WIZARD proudly celebrates the 60th birthday of Superman, the superhero who started it all! Happy Birthday, big guy!

INTERIOR TEXT: Craig Shutt ART: Gene Ha
PHOTOGRAPHY: Paul Schiraldi
SUPERMAN created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster

Our Family Album

Dearest Clark,

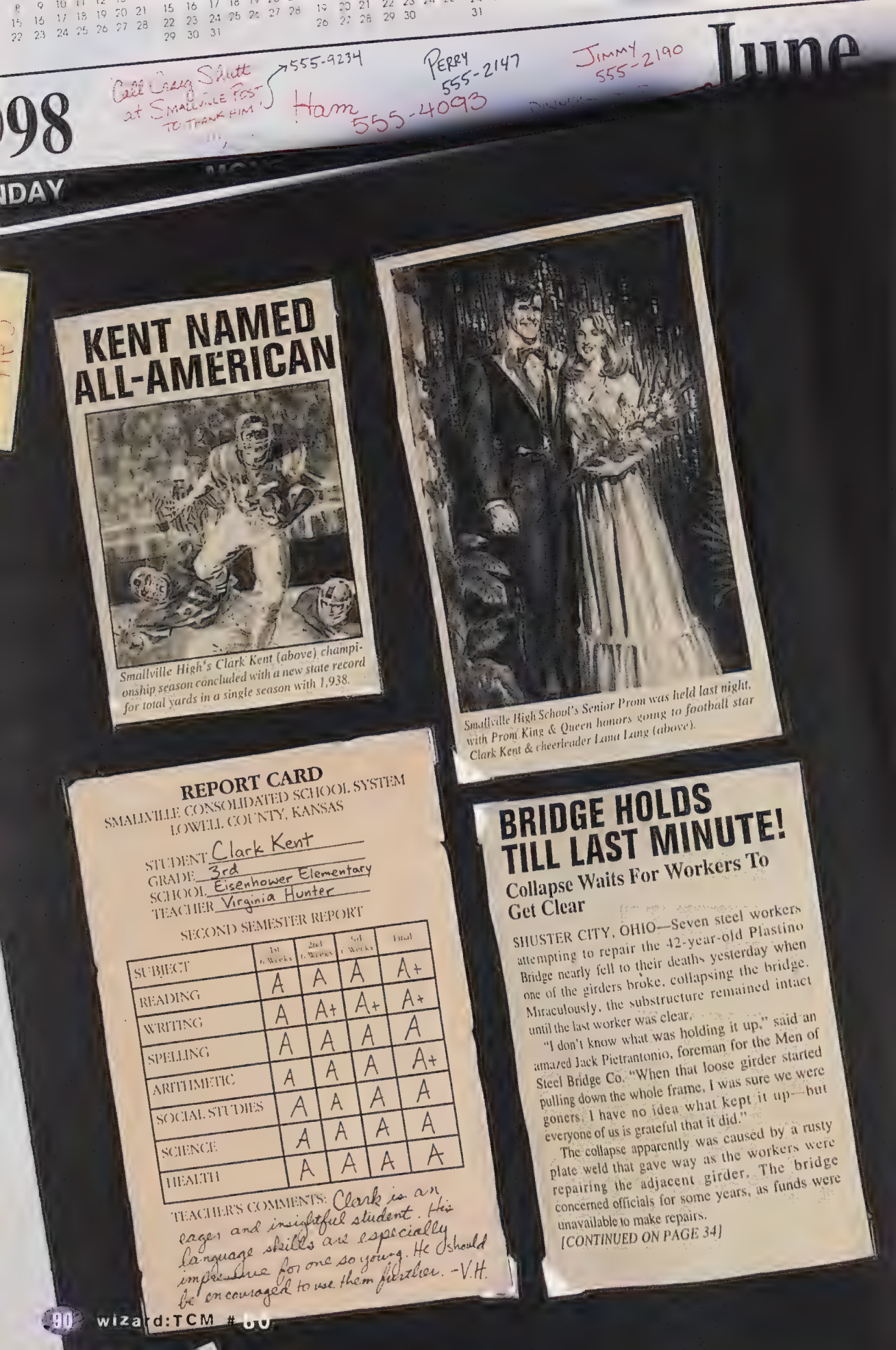
For your birthday, we wanted to give you something really special — our family scrapbook! We feel we've been putting it together for 60 years!

We hope you enjoy this as much as your father and I have over the years.

Happy Birthday!

Love,

Ma and Pa


June
998
NDAY
Call Craig Shutt at Smallville Post to thank him
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KENT NAMED ALL-AMERICAN
Smallville High's Clark Kent (above) championship season concluded with a new state record for total yards in a single season with 1,938.
Smallville High School's Senior Prom was held last night, with Prom King & Queen honors going to football star Clark Kent & cheerleader Lana Lang (above).
REPORT CARD
SMALLVILLE CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL SYSTEM
LOWELL COUNTY, KANSAS
STUDENT Clark Kent
GRADE 3rd
SCHOOL Eisenhower Elementary
TEACHER Virginia Hunter
SECOND SEMESTER REPORT
SUBJECT | 1st 6 Weeks | 2nd 6 Weeks | 3rd 6 Weeks | Final
READING | A | A | A | A+
WRITING | A | A+ | A+ | A+
SPELLING | A | A | A | A
ARITHMETIC | A | A | A | A+
SOCIAL STUDIES | A | A | A | A
SCIENCE | A | A | A | A
HEALTH | A | A | A | A
TEACHER'S COMMENTS: Clark is an eager and insightful student. His language skills are especially impressive for one so young. He should be encouraged to use them further. -V.H.
BRIDGE HOLDS TILL LAST MINUTE!
Collapse Waits For Workers To Get Clear
SHUSTER CITY, OHIO—Seven steel workers attempting to repair the 42-year-old Plastino Bridge nearly fell to their deaths yesterday when one of the girders broke, collapsing the bridge. Miraculously, the substructure remained intact until the last worker was clear.
"I don't know what was holding it up," said an amazed Jack Pietrantonio, foreman for the Men of Steel Bridge Co. "When that loose girder started pulling down the whole frame, I was sure we were goners. I have no idea what kept it up—but everyone of us is grateful that it did."
The collapse apparently was caused by a rusty plate weld that gave way as the workers were repairing the adjacent girder. The bridge concerned officials for some years, as funds were unavailable to make repairs.
[CONTINUED ON PAGE 34]

015—
ANNIVERSA

EARTHQUAKE DOES NO DAMAGE!

The Associated Press

BYRNE, NEVADA—A small Nevada town about 300 miles west of Los Angeles caught the brunt of a mild earthquake yesterday. Miraculously, no real damage was done except for a few shaken up buildings.

"There's just no explanation," said Carl Curtin, a seismologist with the Metropolis Earthquake Warning Service. "It wasn't a major quake, but it should have caused substantially more damage and probably some casualties. Buildings there simply aren't designed to withstand a seismic event of this magnitude. But they did."

When reached for comment, the town's supervisor apparently was overcome by the brush with disaster, saying only that he gave thanks to "God's blessed angel from on high" for saving them. "I think we can rule that out as a real possibility" for the lack of destruction, laughed a U.N. official, who requested anonymity.

[*Continued on page* 7]

CAMPUS STALKER NABBED!

By Clark Kent

SOUTH QUAD—Co-eds throughout the Metropolis University campus can breathe a sigh of relief today, as the late-night stalker terrorizing female students has been captured!

Lyle Smith, 25, of 126 Gammill Ave., was held for police by Jennifer D'Avrio, 19, a Liberal Arts major living at Waid Hall. D'Avrio swore out a complaint against Smith, charging that he had brandished a knife and made threatening remarks.

D'Avrio claimed she received the aid of an unidentified student, who subdued Smith after he pulled the knife. "I didn't think anyone else was around, but all of a sudden he grabbed the guy," D'Avrio told this reporter in an exclusive interview. "He knocked the guy out so easily it looked like he just tapped him, and then he was gone again! I'd sure like to thank him in person."

Police Captain Joseph Manzi noted that the knife found at the scene had a broken blade. "Smith must have struck it against something pretty hard when that other student surprised him," he said. "Whoever he is, he's lucky he wasn't hurt."

[*CONTINUED ON PAGE* 2]

FLOOD WATERS DIVERTED

Town Saved As Hillside Dams River

WEISINGER, PA.—Hundreds of homes and untold lives were saved yesterday when a hillside unexpectedly collapsed into Schwartz Pass, diverting flood waters that were barrelling down on this small town.

The flood waters broke through a crack in the Ellsworth Dam along the Carlin River at about 2:43 p.m. The crack resulted from added pressure caused by the day's torrential downpour, officials said. With little advance notice possible, casualties would have been devastating without nature's timely interference.

"I don't know what caused that hillside to break loose just then," said town engineer Andrew Blanchard. "But I thank God that it did, or we wouldn't be talking right now." Officials say the tons of earth could not have landed better if they had been placed by hand. Blanchard speculated that the landslide was caused by rain and vibrations from last month's tractor pull at the nearby fair grounds.

"I've never been so scared

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 4B]

EARTHQUAKE cont'd

[*Continued from page* 2] The quake registered 5.7 on the Rictor scale, said Curtin.

"Besides some divine intervention, the only way this quake could've avoided significant damage is if somehow the faultline got support from underlying bedrock," he said. "But with the type of faultline this area has, it's pretty unlikely." The last time Nevada was hit with such a quake was in 1978, when the northern region was hit with a 6.9 quake.

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MYSTERIOUS SUPERMAN SAVES SPACE PLANE
Story on Page 3

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METROPOLIS, FRIDAY, JUNE 9
VOL. CXLVII...No. 65,875

THE EXCLUSIVE STORY ON SUPERMAN

By Clark Kent

METROPOLIS—"I want to help people who need to be helped."

That simple philosophy—and the incredible ability to back it up—lies behind the recent activity of the extraordinary man hundreds of Metropolitans have glimpsed in action in recent weeks. Although the reasons why he can perform these super-human feats are unknown even to him, they quickly are making his name a household word: Superman.

He decided to adopt that as his name after seeing it in *Daily Planet* headlines in recent weeks, he says. Superman. It's a monicker, he vows, that he will live up to.

"Although I'm unsure exactly where I'm from, I guess it really doesn't matter," Superman says. "What matters is that I think and feel as an American."

What matters even more is that he can perform incredible feats—and he says he intends to continue to do so to aid humanity. His abilities include super-human strength, the ability to fly, invulnerability to pain or projectiles and extra-keen vision.

"I haven't really tested the limits of my super abilities, yet," he says. "But I haven't run into anything so far that really taxed me beyond my capabilities."

He declined to say where he resides, but his continual presence in Metropolis indicates that he lives nearby. He confirmed that he had been operating in the area for "some time" and of course was the "mystery man" who saved the experimental space plane Constitution.

"That event convinced me that I needed to create a costume that could withstand heavy use," he explains. The "S" emblem and cape, he adds, were included for dramatic effect. "They serve as a symbol that people worldwide can readily relate to," he says. "And I want them to know that from now on, whenever people need my very special kind of help, I'll be there for them."

Does that mean he'll be ready to help 24 hours a day? "I can't be everywhere at once," he cautions. "But I'll try to be wherever I'm needed."

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 2]

FLASH OUT-RACES SUPERMAN!

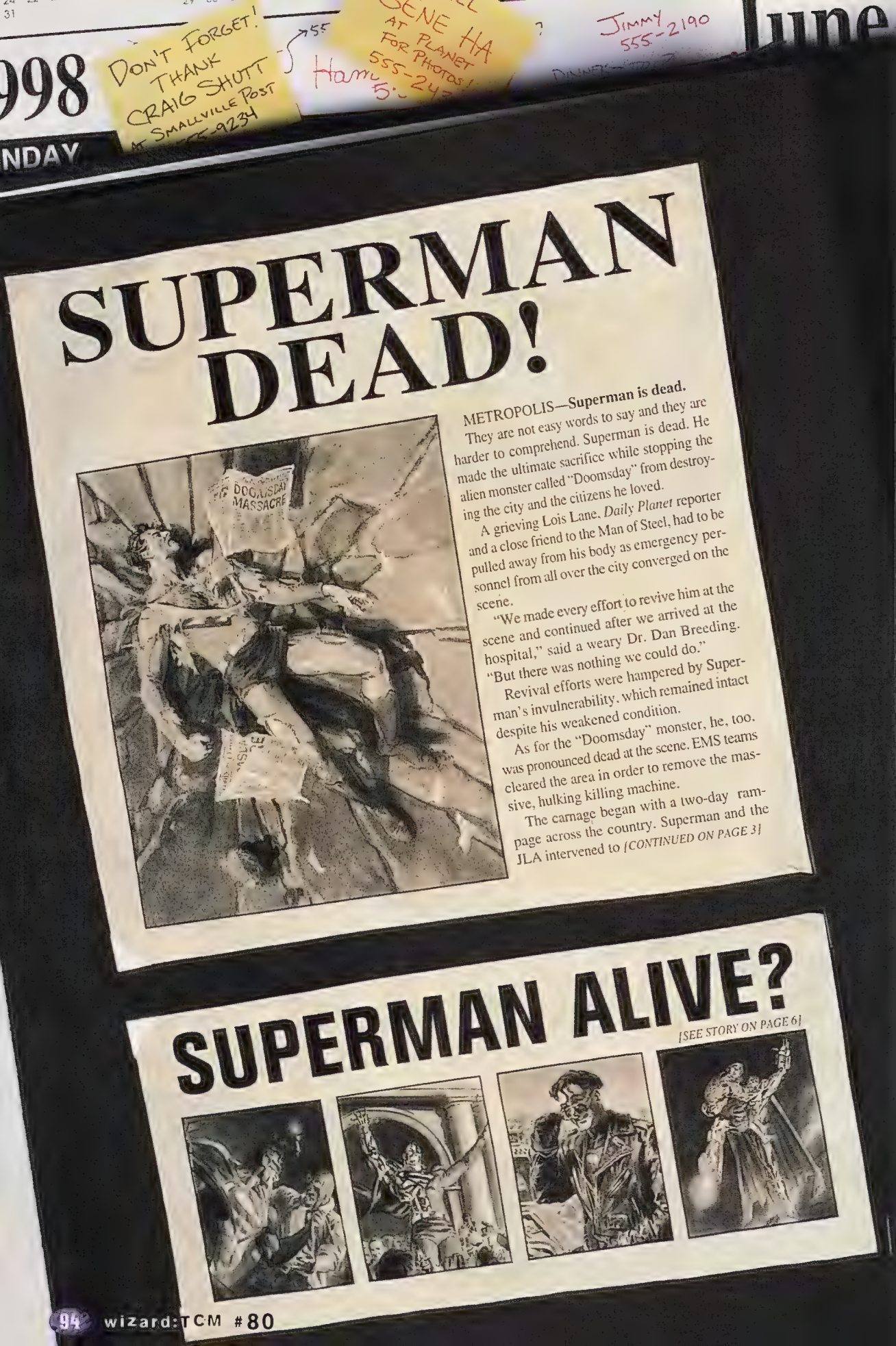
METROPOLIS—It was the marathon of all marathons, an incredible endurance race over thousands of miles that taxed two superheroes to their limits. And if you blinked, you missed it.

The Flash beat Superman—by inches—in an around-the-world race yesterday afternoon. Unknown to either hero, there might have been terrible consequences for the city had Superman won, the Man of Steel told reporters after the race.

"The Flash won fair and square," Superman said. "I'd say he's probably the fastest man alive." When asked his response, Flash said, "Who am I to argue with Superman?"

The two were coerced into the race by Mr. fifth-

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 23]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NDAY
SUPERMAN DEAD!
METROPOLIS—Superman is dead.
They are not easy words to say and they are harder to comprehend. Superman is dead. He made the ultimate sacrifice while stopping the alien monster called "Doomsday" from destroying the city and the citizens he loved.
A grieving Lois Lane, Daily Planet reporter and a close friend to the Man of Steel, had to be pulled away from his body as emergency personnel from all over the city converged on the scene.
"We made every effort to revive him at the scene and continued after we arrived at the hospital," said a weary Dr. Dan Breeding. "But there was nothing we could do."
Revival efforts were hampered by Superman's invulnerability, which remained intact despite his weakened condition.
As for the "Doomsday" monster, he, too, was pronounced dead at the scene. EMS teams cleared the area in order to remove the massive, hulking killing machine.
The carnage began with a two-day rampage across the country. Superman and the JLA intervened to [CONTINUED ON PAGE 3]
SUPERMAN ALIVE?
[SEE STORY ON PAGE 6]

DAILY PLANET
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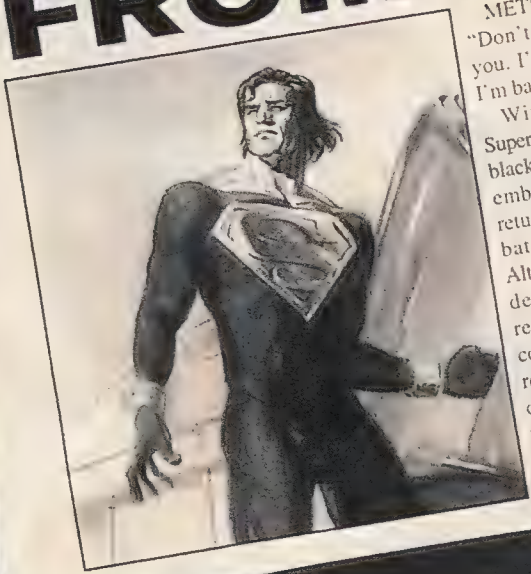
METROPOLIS, MONDAY, APRIL 7
VOL. CXLXII...No. 95,875

SUPERMAN RETURNS FROM GRAVE



METROPOLIS—"Don't let the outfit fool you. I'm Superman—and I'm back."

With those words, Superman—wearing a solid black uniform with a silver emblem—announced his return to the never-ending battle against injustice. Although he could offer no details on how he was revived, his identity was confirmed by *Daily Planet* reporter Lois Lane, using code words she says only they know.

"I don't understand how I got here," Superman said during an impromptu press conference at O'Hara Airport, where he reappeared from inside a 25-foot-tall robot. "All I know is that I've been through a massive trauma. But I promise you, Superman is back. And somebody's going to pay for what they've done."

His reference was to Coast City, Calif., which was destroyed by the cyborg who appeared after Superman was defeated by Doomsday. More than two million people lost their lives when the city

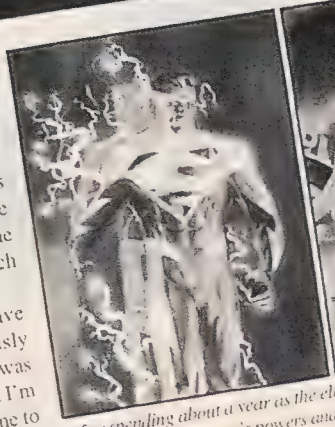
[CONTINUED ON PAGE 4]

BIG BLUE IS BACK

METROPOLIS—The familiar look of this city's red-caped superhero has returned to the skies. Superman found a way to recombine the red- and blue-tinged elements into which he'd been split and is whole once again.

"It's not an experience I want to have again," said the Man of Steel, obviously relieved to be together again. "I really was beside myself with worry for awhile. But I'm confident it's gone for good, allowing me to fully concentrate on helping people."

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 47]



After spending about a year as the electrically powered "Man of Teal," it appears that Superman's powers and costume have returned to "normal."

Basic Training

this month's host: Martin Wagner

How to Shade

That's Martin

ALL RIGHT, ALL YOU BUDDING YOUNG KIRBYS OUT THERE, *SHARPEN YOUR PENCILS!*

THIS IS **ERICA** FROM **HEPCATS**, AND TODAY MY CREATOR *MARTIN WAGNER* & I ARE GOING TO DISCUSS A KEY INGREDIENT TO ANY GOOD DRAWING: LIGHT & SHADE!

PROPER USE OF **LIGHT & SHADE** DOESN'T SIMPLY INDICATE HOW *BRIGHT OR DARK* YOUR DRAWING IS...

...IT CAN GIVE YOUR DRAWING **EMOTIONAL WEIGHT** AS WELL...

...PLUS MAKE IT LOOK MORE *THREE-DIMENSIONAL!*

LEGAL STUFF: "HEPCATS," ERICA, & ALL COMIC BOOK EXCERPTS ARE © & TM 1997 MARTIN WAGNER!

MARTIN SEZ:
ERICA'S RIGHT, GANG!

BASICALLY, WHEN YOU DO A DRAWING, THERE ARE *TWO* TYPES OF LIGHTING THAT WILL AFFECT HOW YOU SHADE...

① SOURCE (or KEY) **LIGHTING:**

THIS IS OBVIOUSLY *WHERE* THE LIGHT IS COMING FROM. IT COULD BE THE SUN, A LAMP, WHATEVER.

② AMBIENT (or BOUNCED) **LIGHTING:**

THIS IS LIGHT THAT IS REFLECTED OFF WALLS OR OTHER OBJECTS IN THE PANEL AND BOUNCED BACK ONTO THE SUBJECT OF THE DRAWING. ... *Now...*

THE LESS STUFF THERE IS TO BOUNCE LIGHT...

...AND THE HARSHER AND BRIGHTER THE LIGHT IS... THE DARKER THE SHADING.

EXAMPLES: *(these are kinda general, still...)*

I • GUY IN DESERT, NOTHING AROUND FOR MILES
• BLINDING SUNLIGHT
• **VERY DARK SHADOW**

II • GUY IN FULLY FURNISHED BEDROOM
• LIGHT FROM CEILING & TABLE LAMP
Whole lotta bouncin' goin' on!
• **LITTLE TO NO SHADING**

SO ANYWAY....!

HOW TO SHADE...AN OVERVIEW:
YOU CAN DO HAND-SHADING, SUCH AS **CROSS-HATCHING**, THOUGH IT TAKES PRACTICE AND ONLY REALLY LOOKS GOOD WITH A CROWQUILL PEN.
(kind of a pain, too)

YOU CAN CUT SHADING **FILM** or **TONE.** SOMETIMES YOU HEAR THIS STUFF CALLED "ZIP-A-TONE." ACTUALLY, THEY'VE GONE OUT OF BUSINESS. I USE FORMATT.™

Note: LAY OFF THIS STUFF IF YOU'RE DOING A COLOR COMIC!

OR, SOME COMICS TODAY LIKE *LUFTWAFFE 1946* USE SOFTWARE LIKE **ADOBE PHOTOSHOP**™ TO DO THEIR SHADING.

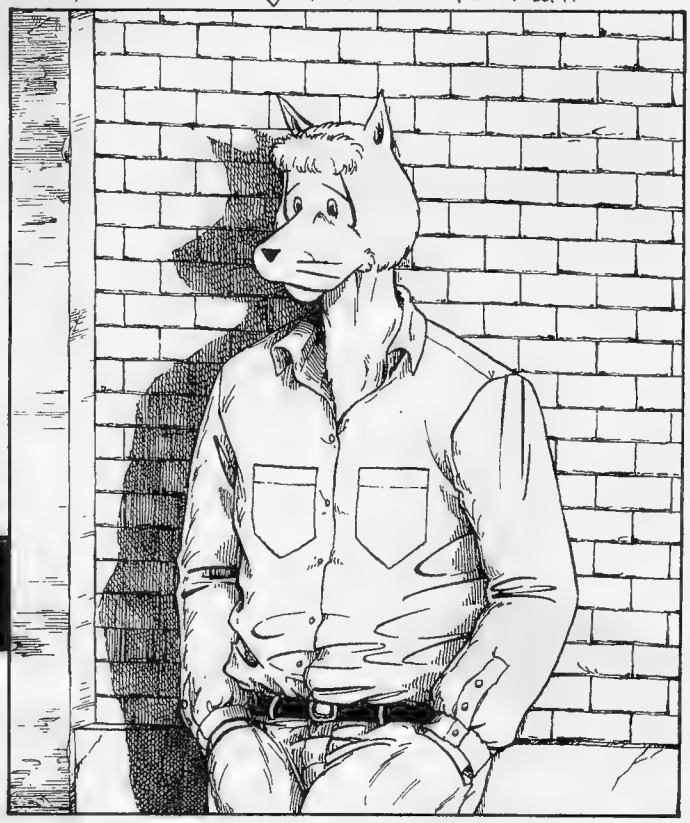
EXPERIMENT WITH LOTS OF TECHNIQUES & FIND WHAT WORKS BEST FOR YOU!

"OKAY, WELL, THIS IS COOL AND EVERYTHING, BUT HOW DO I **DO** IT?"
★ FEAR NOT, WIZ-KIDS. OVER THE NEXT TWO PAGES, ERICA'S GONNA WALK YOU THROUGH IT, STEP-BY-STEP!

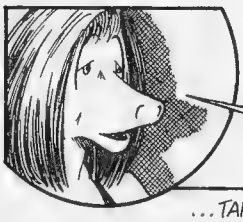
WHAT A DIFFERENCE SHADING MAKES!

HERE'S A DRAWING OF THAT CHICK-MAGNET **JOEY**, WITH NO LIGHT & SHADE. DULL, FLAT, A BIG YAWN.

AHH, MUCH BETTER. LOTS OF DEPTH AND MUCH MORE 3-D. SOURCE LIGHT SHINES DOWN FROM UPPER RIGHT; AMBIENT LIGHT BOUNCES UP FROM LOWER LEFT!



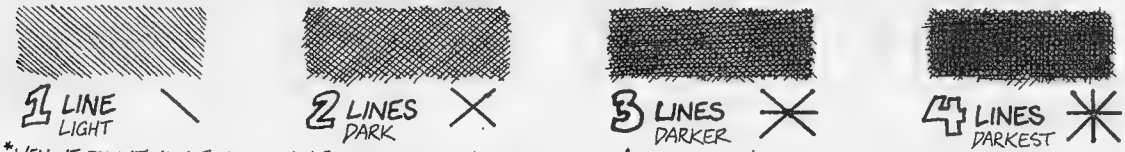
HOW TO SHADE BY HAND



OKAY, WE'RE JUST GOING TO PRACTICE ON A SIMPLE OBJECT, LIKE A **CUBE**. SO, GRAB YOUR PENS, AND...

...TAKE A LOOK AT THE DIFFERENT LAYERS OF CROSS-HATCHING YOU CAN DO.

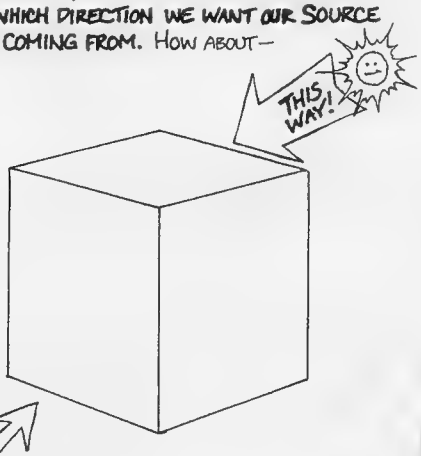
CROSS-HATCHING IS MADE BY DRAWING ROWS OF LINES AT 90-DEGREE* ANGLES TO EACH OTHER!!!



*WELL, IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE EXACTLY 90 DEGREES, BUT YOU GET THE IDEA. ANYTHING OVER 4 LINES MIGHT AS WELL BE SOLID BLACK.

OKAY, HERE'S OUR CUBE!

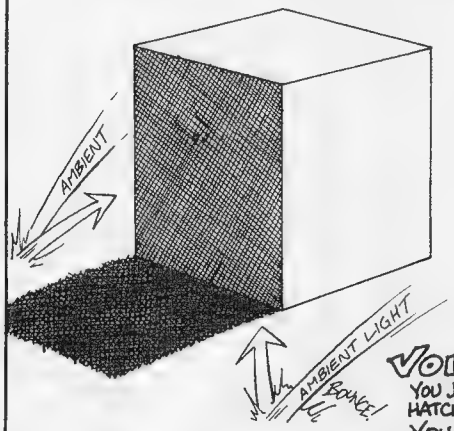
YEP, THAT'S A CUBE, ALL RIGHT. SO LET'S START BY DECIDING **WHICH DIRECTION WE WANT OUR SOURCE LIGHTING COMING FROM.** HOW ABOUT—



THAT MEANS WE'RE GONNA SHADE **THIS** SIDE.

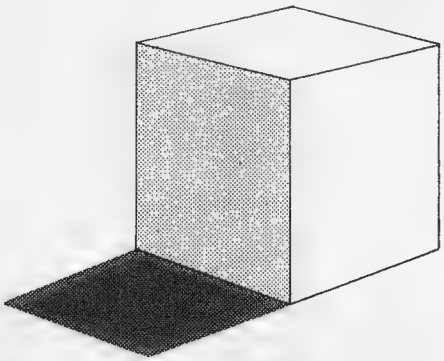
NOW, WE WANT THE SHADING ON THE CUBE TO BE A LITTLE BIT **LIGHTER** THAN THE SHADOW ON THE GROUND. WHY?? BECAUSE OF ALL THAT BOUNCING AMBIENT LIGHT, REMEMBER? SO:

- **2-LINE** CROSS-HATCHING ON THE **CUBE!**
- **4-LINE** CROSS-HATCHING ON THE **GROUND!**



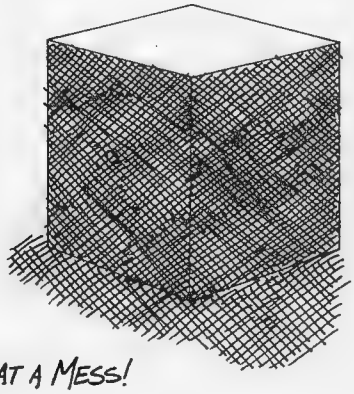
VOILÀ! YOU JUST CROSS-HATCHED A CUBE! YOU ROCK!!

NOW IT'S THE SAME APPROACH WHEN YOU CUT SHADING FILM. (WE'LL SHOW YOU HOW TO CUT IT ON THE NEXT PAGE.) SEE? WE USED SLIGHTLY LIGHTER TONE ON THE CUBE ITSELF. EASY.



THIS IS WRONG! WHY?

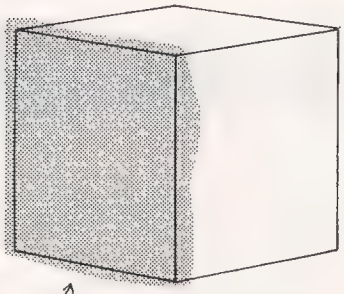
1) LINES ARE THE SAME BOTH ON THE CUBE AND THE GROUND. THE DRAWING LOOKS FLAT.
2) SHAPE OF THE SHADOW DOESN'T MATCH THE CUBE SHAPE. SO WHERE'S THE LIGHT SOURCE COMING FROM?



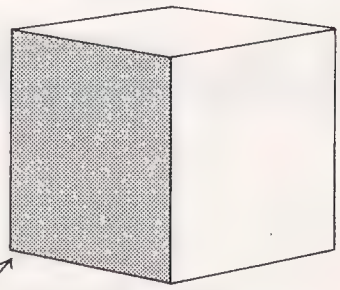
WHAT A MESS!

How to Cut Shading Film...

THIS STUFF IS PRETTY EASY TO USE (BUT IT HAS SOME DRAWBACKS).



lay the stuff down carefully here...



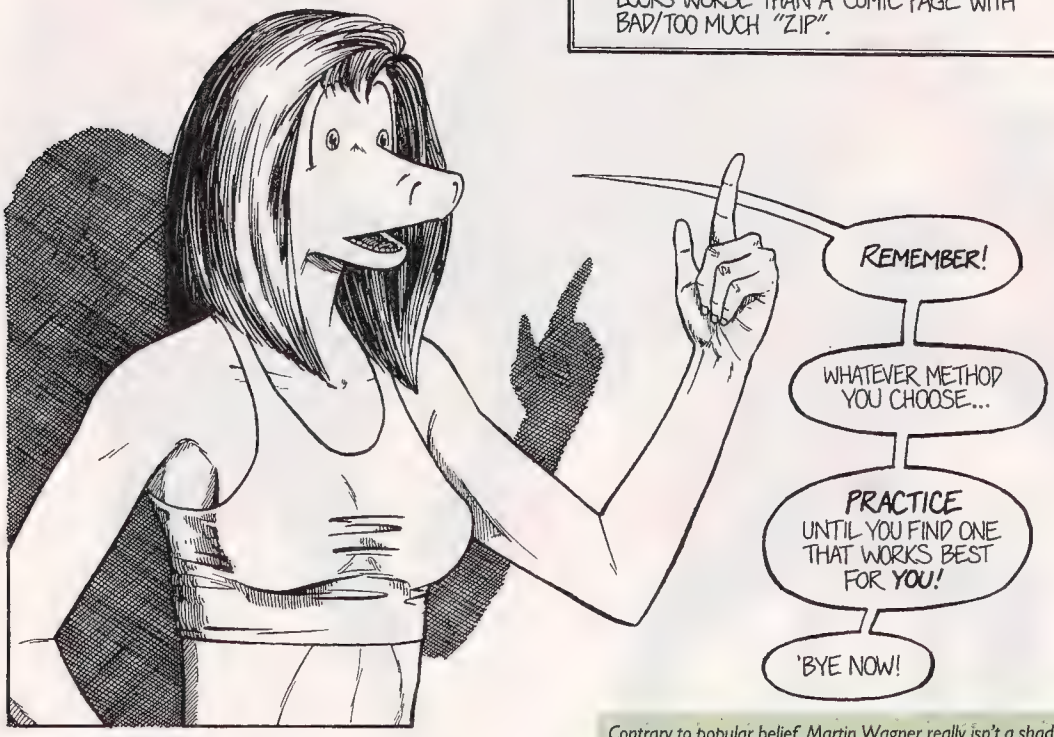
...then trim off the excess film and rub it down so it sticks hard!

1. MEASURE THE AMOUNT OF FILM YOU WILL NEED. (HINT: IF YOU HAVE A LIGHT TABLE OR LIGHT BOX, IT'S A LOT EASIER.) USING AN X-ACTO™ KNIFE, CAREFULLY CUT THE FILM, LIFT IT FROM ITS BACKING, AND STICK IT OVER THE PART OF THE DRAWING YOU WANT TO SHADE.

2. TAKE YOUR X-ACTO KNIFE AND TRIM OFF THE EXCESS FILM.

DRAWBACKS TO USING FILM:

- **IT'S EXPENSIVE!** ANYWHERE FROM $5 TO $10 PER SHEET!!
- LOTS OF ART SUPPLY SHOPS DON'T STOCK IT ANYMORE. ☹
- YOU SHOULDN'T USE IT UNTIL YOU'VE GOTTEN THE HANG OF HAND-SHADING. NOTHING LOOKS WORSE THAN A COMIC PAGE WITH BAD/TOO MUCH "ZIP".



W

Contrary to popular belief, Martin Wagner really isn't a shady kinda guy. You can check out his groovy shading techniques in his somewhat monthly Hepcats *comics, published by Antarctic Press.*

THE TOY CHEST BY TOM PALMER JR.

ALL-NEW X-MEN

Hot on the heels of its Original X-Men Boxed Set, Toy Biz is getting ready to bring the X-Men's second roster, straight from the pages of *Giant-Size X-Men* #1, to action figure form. Comprised of the Dave Cockrum-designed team of Storm, Nightcrawler, Thunderbird, Sunfire, Colossus and Banshee, this set is notable not only for its super-keen sculpting and extra articulation, but also for the fact that it's missing one key X-member: Wolverine. Toy Biz figured fans have more than enough Wolverine figures to choose from and decided to leave the old Canuck out this time around.

And as a follow-up later this year, Toy Biz has even more boxed fun for fans to drool over. Word has it that the Avengers might be the next Marvel team to make the cut. Which incarnation of the team it is, though, is anyone's guess.

As for the X-Men, don't start camping out at the local toy store just yet, kiddies. This boxed-set of the all-new X-Men won't ship until sometime around September.

Photo: Paul Schinaldi

STAR WARS KEEPS ROLLING ON

If you thought the avalanche of Star Wars toys from Kenner was over, guess again. The makers of some of the coolest action figures around unveiled another big chunk of its Star Wars: Power of the Force line for '98, and fans are already drowning in pools of drool. First off, you can check out brand-new pics of previously-announced figures like Captain Piett, R2-D2 with Datalink and Periscope, Princess Leia Organa (with an all-new likeness), Luke Skywalker with Blast Shield Helmet and the Purchase of the Droids 3-Pack (With the first-ever Uncle Owen figure!). And if that's not enough, there's the Complete Galaxy globes of Darth Vader and Yoda; as well as the Rancor and Luke Skywalker, and Wampa and Luke Skywalker in Hoth Gear beast packs.

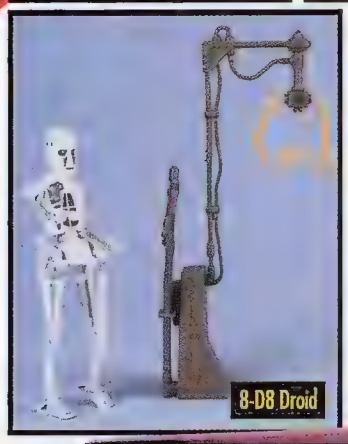
And for the icing on the cake, Kenner's also announced a brand-new wave of figures for the second quarter of the year. Look for all-new figures of one of those bowl-headed Death Star Troopers, the 8-D8 Droid from "Return of the Jedi" (Complete with Power Droid-branding torture rack!), three-eyed alien Ree-Yees, an Ugnaughts two-pack and the Jabba's Dancers 3-Pack, featuring the "ROTJ" Special Edition creations Rystall, Greeata and Lyn Me. Whew!

Luke Skywalker

Princess Leia Organa

Death Star Trooper

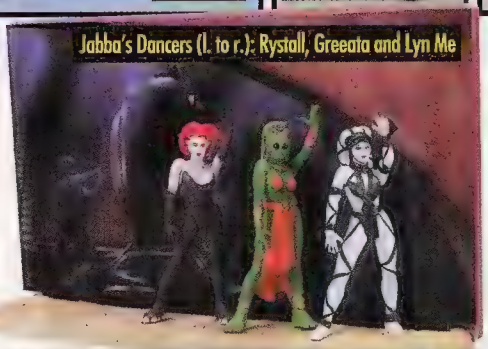
Ree-Yees


8-D8 Droid

Captain Piett

R2-D2 with Data Link and Periscope

Ugnaughts 2-pack


Jabba's Dancers (l. to r.): Rystall, Greeata and Lyn Me

Wampa with Luke in Hoth Gear

Purchase of the Droids (l. to r.): Uncle Owen C-3PO and Luke

Rancor with Luke Skywalker

Photos courtesy of Kenner

JEEPERS CREEPERS!

With the successful "New Batman/Superman Adventures " cartoon blazing up the airwaves, Kenner is adding all-new figures and characters to its Batman line of animation-influenced toys. Joining the recently-released Batman, Nightwing, Robin and Mad Hatter figures is the Creeper, the Steve Ditko and Denny O'Neil creation who happens to make a guest appearance in upcoming episodes of the animated series (and he's also the star of an all-new regular DC comic series). Like the other figures in Kenner's line, the Creeper figure captures the colors and designs of the animated series. Look for the Creeper to be joined on the shelves by brand new versions of the Joker and Two-Face this summer!

If you're looking for even more Batman cartoon-inspired toys, Hasbro New Ventures is set to release a group of 12-inch fully-articulated figures of Bats and his TV co-stars. Look for Batman, Nightwing and the Joker in this Animated Action Collection series.

On the traditionally-styled Batman toy front, Kenner's got a new line called Batman: Knight Force Ninja on the way for August. This 7-inch line features more articulation than recent Bat-offerings (with ball-jointed shoulders and joints at the elbows and knees) as well as tons of accessories and special action features. Two versions of the Dark Knight, Street Warrior Batman (with a twirling training sword and nunchaku actions) and Knight Warrior Batman (featuring a kicking action) are joined by Martial Combat Robin (a punching action Tim Drake incarnation of the Boy Wonder) and an all-new Killer Croc figure (with a whipping tail feature).

Creeper

Photo courtesy of Kenner

Batman Knight Force Ninja (clockwise from top left): Knight Warrior Batman, Killer Croc, Street Warrior Batman and Martial Combat Robin.

Photo courtesy of Kenner

Batman 12-inch Animated Action Collection

Photos: Paul Schiraldi

ToyFare™

THE TOY MAGAZINE

#10

RESIDENT EVIL!
Cover & FREE Poster!

EXCLUSIVE LIMITED FIGURE

STAR TREK™
THE NEXT GENERATION
"TAPESTRY II" PICARD!

ON SALE
IN APRIL

© Wizard Entertainment. ToyFare™ The Toy Magazine™ [illegible] © Wizard Entertainment. Star Trek: The Next Generation™ [illegible]

WISH LIST

THE 10 FIGURES THAT *WIZARD* WANTS TO SEE MADE

1) Amalgam (DC/Marvel Heroes)
Recipe for action figure success: Mix Marvel's biggest heroes with DC Comics' top-stringers to make Dark Claw, Super Soldier, Dr. Strangefate and Iron-cantern. Mold 'em in plastic. Simmer for a few months. Watch fans go crazy.

2) Thunderbolts (Marvel Heroes)
The 'Bolts are throwing the Marvel Universe into a tizzy, and we bet they'd knock toy fans for a loop too. Just make 'em in special two-packs matching each Thunderbolt with his respective villainous secret identity.

3) Classic Spider-Man and Rogues Gallery Boxed Set (Marvel Heroes)
Give Spidey the deluxe treatment he deserves à la the two X-Men boxed sets with a Ditko-style Spider-Man and all his big-name villains like the Vulture, Sandman, Kraven, Mysterio and the Green Goblin in their retro styles. C'mon, Toy Biz!

4) Spirit of Yoda (Star Wars)
Molded in clear blue plastic like Kenner's mail-away Spirit of Obi-Wan figure, this diminutive Jedi master wouldn't have to have any nifty action gimmick. He'd just look cool standing next to Ben.

5) Wonder Woman (DC Heroes)
With a new TV series reportedly in the works, the time is right for a new Wonder Woman figure. With a golden lariat and snap-on *Kingdom Come* armor, she'd melt every toy fans' heart.

6) Iron Man (Marvel Heroes)
There've been tons of Iron Man figures, but the recent "Heroes Return" revamp of Shell-head is just ripe for toy heaven. Throw in some snap-on repulsor rays and a mail-in-offer for a Tony Stark figure and you're all set.

7) Commissioner Gordon (Batman: The Animated Series)
Kenner's new animated Batman figures are flying off the shelves, and fans want more. Who's the one important part of the Batman mythos who's *never* been captured in plastic? Try Commissioner Gordon, complete with a big revolver and a light-up Bat Signal.

8) Oola (Star Wars)
Kenner's already making Jabba's Dancers, so an Oola figure can't be too far off. Just give her a choker chain and a multi-posable body so she can shimmy and shake all over Jabba's Palace.

9) Zauriel (DC Heroes)
That new angel-guy from the pages of *JLA* is just ripe for the action figure gold mine. All this figure needs is a flaming sword, articulated wings and authentic sonic cry sound-chip.

10) Cait Sith (Final Fantasy VII)
Bandai's imported Final Fantasy figures are flying off the shelves, but some fans are perplexed that certain characters got the shaft. We'd want Cait Sith, that cat creature on the back of a big stuffed marshmallow thing, with a wind-up action to make him wobble around.

Hey! Keep sending them Top 10 lists! You've already made a difference! Drop us a note with your "dream figures" at:

c/o Wizard Entertainment
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920

Or e-mail us at:
WizardTGTC@aol.com

UNLOCKING THE VAULT

Toy Biz has been poking into every corner of the Marvel Universe lately, trying to dig up all-new heroes and villains that have never been captured as action figures before. This spring, the Biz will open up the Vault, the maximum security prison designed to hold some of the world's most dangerous villains. First up for the Vault? Howabout Ultron, Stegron the Dinosaur Man and hot tamale Typhoid Mary? As the latest in Toy Biz's 6-inch Collector Series, the figures in the Vault line have detailed sculpting and if fan reaction is positive, we can look for more baddies in the coming months.

All Photos: Paul Schiraldi

DREAMIN' OF GENIE

See what ya get when you rub too many magic lamps? Awesome Toys has sculpted up the next character for its action figure line, and this time around it's Genie from the new series *Re:Gex*. Sculpted by Joel Vinte (who was also responsible for Awesome's debut Prophet figure), Genie stands 7 inches tall and comes with a battle sword, horns, a tail and one of the skimpiest little costumes around. Look for this li'l lady to slink her way into comic book stores this July.

WABBIT SEASON!

Antarctic Press, one of the first comic book companies to jump into the action figure arena, is getting ready to unleash another wave of all-new action figures. First up is Usagi Yojimbo, the rabbit ronin taken from Stan Sakai's popular and long-running creator-owned comic series. Hitting comic stores this June, Usagi comes with two swords, a spear and a li'l lizard pal Spot.

And out in stores already from Antarctic is an all-new version of Warrior Nun Areala, this time sculpted from the upcoming OVA (that's Original Video Animation for the uneducated), with an anime-style head and molded plastic clothing. The regular black outfit nun is also available in red, gold and glow-in-the-dark variants. W

You don't wanna know what happens when you rub ToyFare *assistant editor Tom Palmer Jr. too many times.*

Usagi Yojimbo (left) and Spot

All Photos: Paul Schiraldi

Antarctic's Warrior Nun Areala comes in three colors!

HOMEMADE HEROES

THE ARENA FOR FAN-MADE ACTION FIGURES.

GRAND PRIZE

X-MEN

Dany Thibeault of Quebec, Canada

Barbie dolls? Megos? 8-inch? 10-inch? Ehhhh? They look like Barbies. But to be honest, we have no idea what Thibeault (wonder how that's pronounced) used, but these X-Men figures look cool...dare we even say much cooler than those 12-inch Rogue and Storm Toy Biz "Dress-Up" figures that came out.

All of these figures were made from plain old, ordinary figures and household materials. The hard-working Grand Prize Winner makes off with a spiffy Shi statue, a Shi mug and bandanna, and three Shi trade paperbacks signed by Billy Tucci, while the Runner-Up scores the mug, bandanna and signed paperbacks. Everyone else gets a *Shi* comic signed by Tucci, and a Shi mug. Fantastic work, folks!

Many thanks to the Crusade people for the killer prizes!

RUNNER-UP

GHOST

Craig and Julie Frey of Pittsburgh, Pa.

By taking a Playmates Savage Dragon She-Dragon figure's body, adding a Playmates WildC.A.T.s Zealot head and tossing on some white fabric for a cape, this Dark Horse beauty emerges. Doesn't that sound poetic?

GIANT-MAN AND VISION

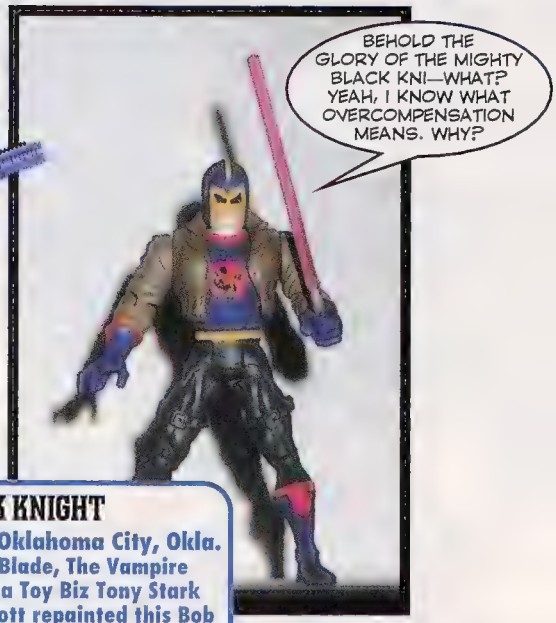
Brad Simmons of Foster City, Calif.
As Brad explains, Giant-Man grew out of a "generic [Hasbro] G.I. Joe type figure," to which he added a Toy Biz Mr. Fantastic's accessories for a massively awesome Avenger. Vision is a repainted Toy Biz Silver Surfer with a Toy Biz Backlash figure cape.

WONDER WOMAN

John Achziger of Spokane, Wash.
Wizard copy editor and biggest Wonder Woman fan in the known universe Marc Wilkofsky fainted (literally) when he gazed at this incredible-looking redoctored 10-inch Toy Biz Rogue figure.

SOLAR: MAN OF THE ATOM

Glendon Sylvester of Silver Spring, Md.
Ex-X-Men writer and now Editor-in-Chief of Acclaim Comics Fabian Nicieza will get a kick outta this Solar figure created from a Toy Biz Space Riders Cyclops head and a Toy Biz Mutant Armor Series Quicksilver body.



BLACK KNIGHT

Scott Edmonds of Oklahoma City, Okla.
Using a Toy Biz Blade, The Vampire Hunter body and a Toy Biz Tony Stark head and mask, Scott repainted this Bob Harras/Steve Epting version of the Avengers' Black Knight.

If you're interested in entering the homemade figure contest, send well-lit, clear, color photographs (No Polaroids, and put 'em in a cool or funny pose!), along with your name, address, a DETAILED DESCRIPTION of how you created your figure, and your full phone number (including area code) to:

HOMEMADE HEROES
c/o Wizard Entertainment
PO Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

The "Everybody Smoosh Now" Art Contest

Grand Prize (1)

One twisted reader will have his smooshed Image character appear prominently in *Altered Image* #2 and be given credit for his creation. Plus, he will receive the page of original art his creation appears on, a set of *Altered Image* #1-#3 signed by writer/artist Jim Valentino and an Image "I" cloisonné pin.

First Prize (25)

Twenty-five highly imaginative readers will each have their smooshed Image character appear in *Altered Image* #2 and be given credit for their creation. Plus, they will receive a set of *Altered Image* #1-#3 signed by writer/artist Jim Valentino and an Image "I" cloisonné pin.

This contest is sponsored by Image Comics, the guys with the most pinchable cheeks in comics.

It seems like any normal day in the Image Universe, except reality has gone haywire. And it's up to Spawn, Witchblade, The Savage Dragon, The Maxx, ShadowHawk and Majestic to make things right again. But when these characters touch, they become amalgamated versions of themselves. It's Witchestic, ShadowSpawn and Dragaxx to the rescue! But the world is full of these smooshed characters and this is your chance to contribute.

Take two Image characters, not including Spawn, Witchblade, The Savage Dragon, The Maxx, ShadowHawk and Majestic, throw them into a blender together and draw what comes out. In other words, draw your own amalgamated Image character, give him a cool amalgamated name and send it in. The coolest ones will actually show up in *Altered Image* #2. Snicky Doodle!

Legal Jumble

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Entertainment, Image Comics, their immediate families and whoever came up with the idea to include Majestic. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach the form or card to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: The "Everybody Smoosh Now" Art Contest, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Entertainment and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Is smoosh really a word? Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. Is amalgam really a word? **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by April 30, 1998.** Wizard Entertainment is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Prize winners will be selected based on originality and creativity by Wizard Entertainment. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Winners will be notified no later than June 5, 1998. If an entrant, having been declared as a winner, does not accept the prize or the prize or prize notification is undeliverable, another entry will be selected. In the event that a prize is not available or it becomes impossible for the sponsor to award the prize which has been designated, the sponsor retains the right to substitute a prize or product of equal value to the winner. Determination of whether a prize or product is of equal value is in the sole discretion of the sponsor. Winning entries will be selected on or about May 15, 1998.

For a list of winners, available after May 15, 1998, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: "Everybody Smoosh Now" Winners List, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Fill this out, attach your entry and put it in an envelope. Send to: The "Everybody Smoosh Now" Art Contest, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

The "Everybody Smoosh Now" Art Contest Entry Form

DEADLINE IS APRIL 30, 1998!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Did you attach your entry?

JUNK DRAWER

By David Borak and the *Wizard* staff

All items, except where noted, can be found in your friendly neighborhood comic shop. If you can't find a product, ask your favorite comic shop owner to order it for you.

Little bits of everything in the world of comic-related merchandise

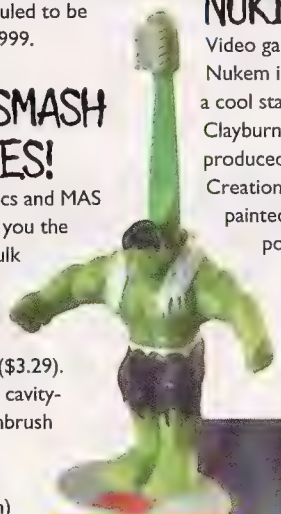
PORCELAIN LANTERN

DC Comics presents the second offering in the Green Lantern statue collection—the Silver Age Hal Jordan statue ($195). This cold-cast porcelain statue shows Hal leaping into action; it can either stand alone or right beside the Kyle Rayner Green Lantern statue via their interlocking bases. The Hal Jordan statue will be available in May and is limited to just 6,000 editions. A third GL statue, Alan Scott (the Golden Age GL), is scheduled to be released in 1999.

Green Lantern statue

HULK SMASH CAVITIES!

Marvel Comics and MAS Brands bring you the Incredible Hulk Bendable Glow-in-the-Dark Toothbrush ($3.29). Yes, this real cavity-fighting toothbrush (sadly, only made for a child's mouth) bends to scrub those hard-to-reach places. It even glows in the dark so you can brush your gamma-irradiated gums without the lights on. The Hulk Toothbrush is currently available wherever toothbrushes are sold.



Glow-in-the-dark Hulk toothbrush

A LITTLE NUKIN'

Video game hero Duke Nukem is getting his turn as a cool statuette. Sculpted by Clayburn Moore and produced by Moore Creations, this hand-painted, cold-cast porcelain statuette ($99) features Nukem atop a dead monster with guns a-blazin'. Duke stands 7 3/4 inches tall and is limited to just 8,500 pieces. It's available right this minute.

Duke Nukem statue

SUPERWATCH

The Superman '98 Luminescent Watch ($69.95) is the newest in the line of cool watches by DC Comics. This watch features the same stainless-steel casing as the '97 Superman watch (which featured the blue-and-white S-shield), but sports the classic red-and-yellow S-shield. Best of all, the S-shield on the Superman '98 Watch glows a luminous blue at the touch of a button. Look up in the sky for this cool watch—limited to a maximum production of 5,000—this March.

T-SHIRTS, ASSEMBLE!

Marvel Comics and Graphitti Designs present a series of superhero T-shirts ($16.95, $19.95 for beefcake XXLs) with a huge cast of Marvel characters. The "Star Struck Captain America" T-shirt features the big, white star of Cap on a blue background, the "Wolverine's A Comin'" T-shirt offers art by Leonardo Manco, and the "Avengers Reborn" T-shirt has the original six Avengers done by artists George Pérez and Al Vey. Printed on heavyweight cotton, these Marvel T-shirts are available in March.

Marvel T-shirts

NEW GENERATION RING

If those darn Gen[13] kids ever went to high school, they'd get one of these cool Gen[13] Collector's Rings ($8.95) from WildStorm Productions. Each metal ring features the Gen[13] logo and has adjustable sizing so that it fits on almost anyone's finger. These rings will be available in specialty shops this March.

Darkness poster

WALL OF DARKNESS

Top Cow Comics and artists Michael Turner, D-Tron and Jonathan D. Smith present The Darkness Poster III ($4.99). This new Darkness poster features hitman playboy Jackie Estacado surrounded by a bevy of scantily clad babes. The 26 1/2" x 39" jumbo poster will be available everywhere on March 11.

Product of the Month

GREEDO GETS BUSTED

Greedo, the evil bounty hunter who meets his maker in George Lucas' classic sci-fi flick "Star Wars," is now immortalized in a cold-cast porcelain bust from Legends in 3 Dimensions. The Greedo Bust ($159) measures 9 1/2 inches tall and is hand-painted porcelain with brass spines on his head. Each piece comes with a certificate of authenticity. Watch for Greedo to bust out in March.

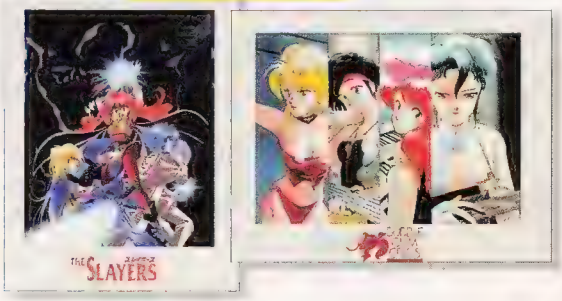
SUPERMAN GETS MUGGED

DC Comics offers up a series of Superman Mugs ($14.95 each), each with a famous Superman comic book cover plastered on it in full color! The *Action Comics* #419 mug has Neal Adams and Murphy Anderson's memorable cover to this 1972 comic. The *Adventures of Superman* #505 mug reproduces Tom Grummett and Doug Hazelwood's 1993 cover of the Man of Steel soaring over Metropolis. Finally, the *Superman* #1 mug shows the Golden Age Superman by Joe Shuster leaping tall buildings in this 1939 comic cover. Each white porcelain Superman mug is individually boxed and will ship at the end of April.

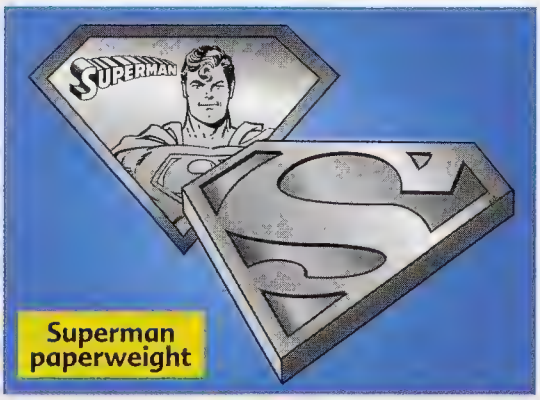
Superman mugs

CEL OF BUBBLEGUM?

Anime is hotter than a tamale on the sun and Simitar Entertainment is producing eight limited-edition Chroma cels ($14.95) based on the hit cartoons "Bubblegum Crisis" and "The Slayers." Four cels will be devoted to each show, and each image comes matted and limited to 5,000 copies. Look for these cels in video stores throughout the 50 states in March.



"Bubblegum Crisis" and "The Slayers" cels



Superman paperweight

PAPERWEIGHT OF STEEL

You can hold down your notes, coupons and even comics with DC Comics' Superman S-Shield Pewter Paperweight ($39.95). The third in DC's pewter paperweight series, this solid product is in the shape of the S-shield. It has the classic S-shield on one side, and an image of the Man of Steel on the other. Limited to just 2,500 copies, the Superman Pewter Paperweight will be available in April.

OH MY POSTCARDS!

You'll go postal over the new Dark Horse Comics *Oh My Goddess!* Postcard Collection ($12.95). This deluxe, slipcover postcard book contains 32 5" x 7 1/8" postcards with full-color artwork, much of which is from the covers of the English-language comic books. Look for the cards at the end of April.

Dark Horse postcards

HEY! Are you a company putting out some super-spankerific good fun in the form of comic-related merchandise like Firestar's irradiated TV dinners, the Superman disguise kit and Dr. Strange's Flaming Fires of Faltine artificial logs? If so, we'd love to include 'em in our equally super-spanktaceous "Junk Drawer" column. (Of course, we'd also like to feature previews of statues, T-shirts, novelties, magnets, etc.) Please send all info and sample products to:

Junk Drawer
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920

JUNK DRAWER video games

By Steve Brown and the *Wizard* staff

THE SPAWN OF A NEW GENERATION

Licensing any sort of property and translating it into a video game is always a risky proposition. From the Atari 2600's *E.T.* to *Magic: The Gathering* for the PC, video game graveyards are littered with the corpses of failed licenses. Now, Sony has released *Spawn: The Eternal* for the Sony PlayStation, a game meant to capitalize on the popularity of *Spawn* (the comic) and "Spawn" (the movie).

A long time in the making, this 3-D fighter offers up a rarity in video games—an entirely new feature. In *Spawn*'s case, users are given the ability to rip off a foe's limbs and beat them silly with it. Is it enough, or will the specter of failed licenses reign once again?

Spawn: The Eternal

MANUFACTURER: Sony Interactive
PLATFORM: PlayStation
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $49.99, available now

Punch and kick. Mash the buttons like there's no tomorrow. You too can beat *Spawn: The Eternal* but ultimately, it might not be worth the effort.

The game's plot is eminently sound. Users assume the role of the Hellspawn Spawn, moving the anti-hero through three different time stages to confront the devil Malebolgia, the game's final boss. In doing so, players get to fight with three separate incarnations of Spawn (Medieval Spawn, Primitive Spawn and Normal Spawn) and battle against such familiar scum as Overt-kill, Redeemer, Violator, Nightshade and the Vandalizer.

Alas though, *Spawn* only scratches the surface of its potential. Meant to be a 3-D fighting adventure, the game's graphics are not on par with those of the Playstation's higher profile games' backgrounds, like *Resident Evil 2* and *Abe's Oddworld Oddysee*, which better utilize the PlayStation's awesome graphic capabilities.

Spawn's gameplay is sometimes confusing. Disorienting shifts in perspective serve to disrupt the

Spawn: The Eternal

flow of battle. At the start, players are afforded a third-person view straight out of *Tomb Raider*. Enter into a scuffle with any baddie, though, and the game shifts to a side-view reminiscent of *Mortal Kombat*. This switch in perspective is, at best, a distraction that can take away from a user's enjoyment.

The hero tends to move slowly and clumsily. In combat, users are given various punch and kick options, and can shoot fireballs or hurl Spawn's chains. The options are great, but they're unnecessary—even the most inexperienced player can defeat any enemy (including the bosses) by jamming on the kick button. And while players are pounding the buttons, they're treated to some of the most stock sound effects and somber soundtrack imaginable, both of which tend to further distract and confound.

Star Wars: Masters of Teräs Käsi

MANUFACTURER: LucasArts
PLATFORM: PlayStation
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $49.99, available now

It was only a matter of time before the Star Wars characters would be thrust into some sort of fighting video game. *Teräs Käsi* allows gamers the opportunity to battle (in *Street Fighter*-type brawls) as Luke Skywalker, Han Solo, Chewbacca, Princess Leia, Boba Fett, a Tusken Raider, a Gamorrean Guard, a new Jedi Arden Lynn and, with the help of some secret codes (see "It's Your Move" sidebar), Darth Vader, Slave Leia, a Stormtrooper and others.

Teräs Käsi is a pretty straightforward 3-D fighter with some neat additions. Users are given the opportunity to fight with or without weapons (lightsabers, laser guns, bowcaster, flame throwers, battle axes, etc.) and use special "Force" moves to inflict major damage on their foes. Smart players will quickly learn to eschew hand-to-hand combat in favor of a good weapon. The weapons do more damage, and have no noticeable drawbacks. On the whole, the characters are well-balanced, but Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker do seem stronger than the rest.

Character sprites are a bit chunky, and each fighter moves with some awkwardness, throwing off the battles; the animation seems to be missing a few frames, which causes choppiness. Overall, the game's backgrounds are fairly interesting, if just a bit sparse.

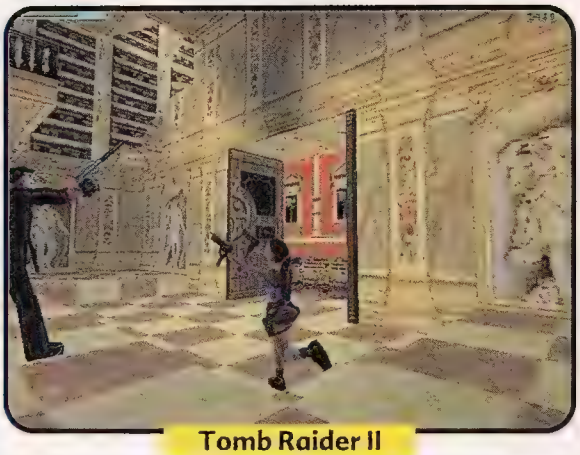
Better fighting games exist, this is sure, but the lure of fighting with Star Wars characters is undeniable. *Star Wars: Masters of Teräs Käsi* does not excel as a pure fighter, but neither does it fall face-first.

Tomb Raider II

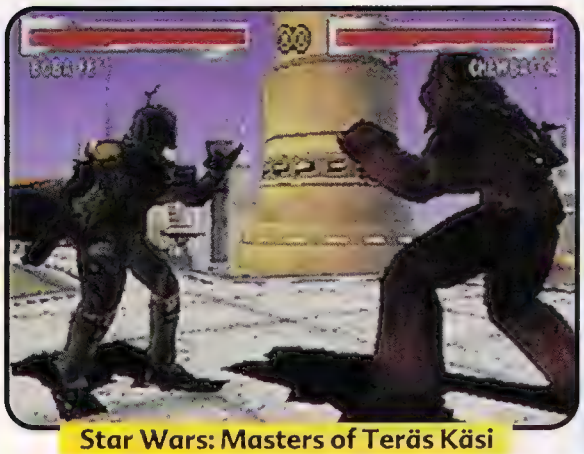
MANUFACTURER: EIDOS
PLATFORM: PlayStation
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $49.99, available now

Tomb Raider II is a perfect example of a fun, well-done video game. Heroine Lara Croft returns in the mother of all 3-D adventures, this time searching for the dagger of Xian, navigating through 18 tough levels (some of them in outdoor environments) to find it.

Super-smooth graphics and enormous fully 3-D levels are the delicious eye-candy that tops off the hearty-meal-like gameplay. *Tomb Raider II* also sports a lot more enemies, traps and puzzles than its predecessor. Even Lara's jump moves and weapons have been souped up. The game's challenge is immense, and the cut-scenes are breathtaking. Simply put, everything that's good with video games can be found inside each and every copy of *Tomb Raider II*. W



Tomb Raider II



Star Wars: Masters of Teräs Käsi

IT'S YOUR MOVE

• Special moves and secret codes •

STAR WARS: MASTERS OF TERÄS KÄSI

(PLAYSTATION) CHEAT CODES

• PLAY AS DARTH VADER
To access the Dark Lord of the Sith, simply defeat the game with Luke Skywalker on "Standard" or "Jedi" difficulty.

• PLAY AS A STORMTROOPER
To fight with a Stormtrooper, conquer arcade mode with Han Solo on "Standard" or "Jedi" setting.

• PLAY AS SLAVE LEIA
Leia in slave garb is accessible after a user conquers arcade mode with Leia on "Jedi" setting.

• PLAY AS MARA JADE
To become the Empire's elite bodyguard (as mentioned in the Timothy Zahn novels) hold the L1, L2 and R1 buttons entering Team Mode on "Jedi" difficulty. After the computer selects, Mara Jade is unlocked—if the player wins the battle.

• BIG HEAD MODE
Hold down select during loading and all characters will appear with huge cranums.

TOMB RAIDER II

(PLAYSTATION) CHEAT CODES

All of these codes require Lara to be standing on a flat surface.

• LEVEL SKIP
Step left, step right, step left, step back, step forward, turn around three times, do a forward jump and then immediately press the roll button to exit to the next level.

• ALL WEAPONS
Step left, step right, step left, step back, step forward, turn around three times, do a backward jump and then press the roll button to get all weapons and lots of ammo.

THE SKINNY

Comic book REVIEWS from *Wizard* Editors Brian Cunningham, Andrew Kardon and Lars Pearson

THE SCORING

6 THE BEST | 5 EXCELLENT | 4 GOOD | 3 SO-SO | 2 UGH | 1 CRAPOLA

X-FORCE

This book's X-itis is curable

Issues Reviewed: #68-#73
Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: Marvel Comics
Regular Creative Team: John Francis Moore, Adam Pollina and Mark Morales
Price/Frequency: $1.99/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Banded together by the mutant militant leader Cable, team members Siryn, Sunspot, Meltdown, Warpath, Danielle Moonstar and Domino are a mutant strikeforce fighting for mutant rights. They have since left Cable behind and hit the road as free agents.

The Good: Once the team dumps Cable and heads off on its own (issue #70), this series really starts taking off. Without crossovers to stifle characterization, you learn and care more about these characters. And without Cable's financing, these kids tackle a rare predicament: making money. Sure, snotty rich kid Sunspot tries charging everything on his credit cards, but when his credit's suddenly no good, the team has to fend for itself.

Helpful footnotes give this team a real sense of history. These characters have been around for a long time, and well-timed references to the team's past helps round out these heroes a bit.

And the initial concept of the team is intriguing as well. Basically, X-Force is an aggressive X-Men team whose members are sick and tired of being persecuted and take matters into their own hands.

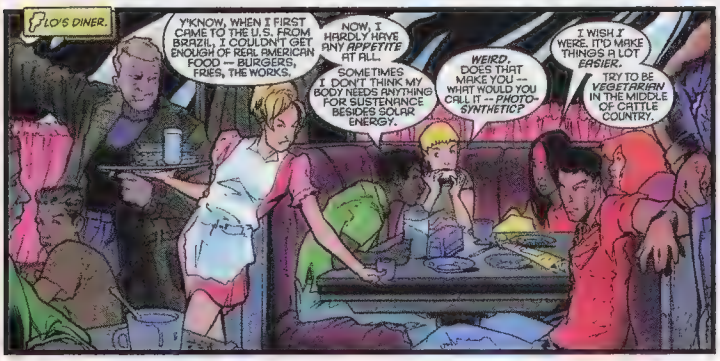
The quirky art actually works with this title, giving a physical manifestation to the outcast nature of this team.

The Bad: *X-Force* suffers from X-itis—an ailment common to mutant titles in that there's too much going on. There are too many plot threads being spun at the same time—all vying for equal time. Here's a sampling of only three plotlines going on all at once by issue #72 and #73: the core team goes to Las Vegas as bodyguards, Warpath and Siryn investigate the death of Warpath's family and Domino returns to her freelance mercenary trade. The book's focus becomes scattershot and you wonder which story is the main one. Some of these threads (like Warpath searching for the Vanisher in another dimension in issue #70) appear to be there just to keep these characters in the book.

Even though this title's taken on a whole new direction, *X-Force* needs to focus on *one* direction, not three or four. You don't get a good grasp of why these heroes are still a team and when they'll even be together as one team again. Hopefully, future issues will converge all these plotlines and make it a cohesive series again.

Finally, these guys all need costumes. Half the team members don't wear any, and the others wear something out of a weird Michael Jackson video.

The Buzz: The title's new direction has fans abuzz with the possibilities of a Cable-less X-Force. That alone should keep *X-Force* as a top-20 book.



The Skinny: This team book has the potential to be the best of the X-bunch, with interesting characters and an "on the run" mentality. It just needs to focus on one team of characters with the "on the run" direction.

Warpath's search for his family's killers is but one of many plotlines vying for center stage.

With Cable out of the picture, the characters have become individuals you can care about.

The Verdict: 3 SO-SO

THE SKINNY

IMPULSE

Quick with humor, slow with substance

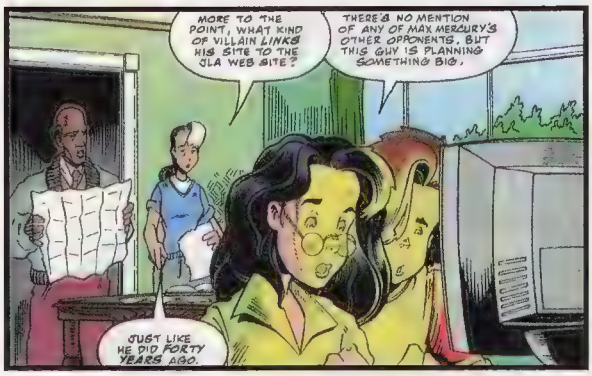
Issues Reviewed: #29-#34
Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: DC Comics
Regular Creative Team: William Messner-Loebs, Craig Rousseau and Barbara Kaalberg
Price/Frequency: $1.95/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Teen speedster Bart Allen (grandson of the Silver Age Flash) grew up in an accelerated virtual reality in the 30th century. Now in the 20th century, Bart lives with his speedster mentor Max Mercury, who helps him control his super-speed and impulsive nature as the teen hero Impulse.

The Good: This book can be very funny. The hysterical visual thought balloons let readers inside Impulse's head. When someone mentions to Impulse that he was a navy SEAL, Impulse thinks up a picture of an actual seal wearing a navy uniform (issue #29). The cartoony art is expressive, letting you in on the book's attitude almost immediately. Heck, even the covers are pretty much a one-gag joke.

Impulse himself is a big part of the fun, and we see the world through his impatient eyes. Who hasn't sat in history class watching the clock crawl by? Well, it happens to Bart every day. And having grown up in a virtual reality setting in the far future, everything's one big video game for Bart, so he's always acting without thinking of the consequences. Keeping up with this super-speedy teen hero is a hoot. And there's also a good teenage/school feel to the book, through Bart's friends, classmates, teachers and even guidance counselors.

The Bad: *Impulse* is missing the energy and depth that it used to have. The stories are way too simple and goofy. In fact, you never feel the characters are in any real danger—a trait the series always used to balance with the humor. How does Impulse find out which villain kidnapped Max Mercury in issue #31? Simple, he searches the Internet and finds the evil Dr. Morlo's Web page which reveals the location of his secret hideout! And in issue #33, Impulse stops White Lightning by throwing papers into her helicopter's engine. It's ridiculously forced outcomes like these that make *Impulse* read like a silly episode of "Scooby Doo."

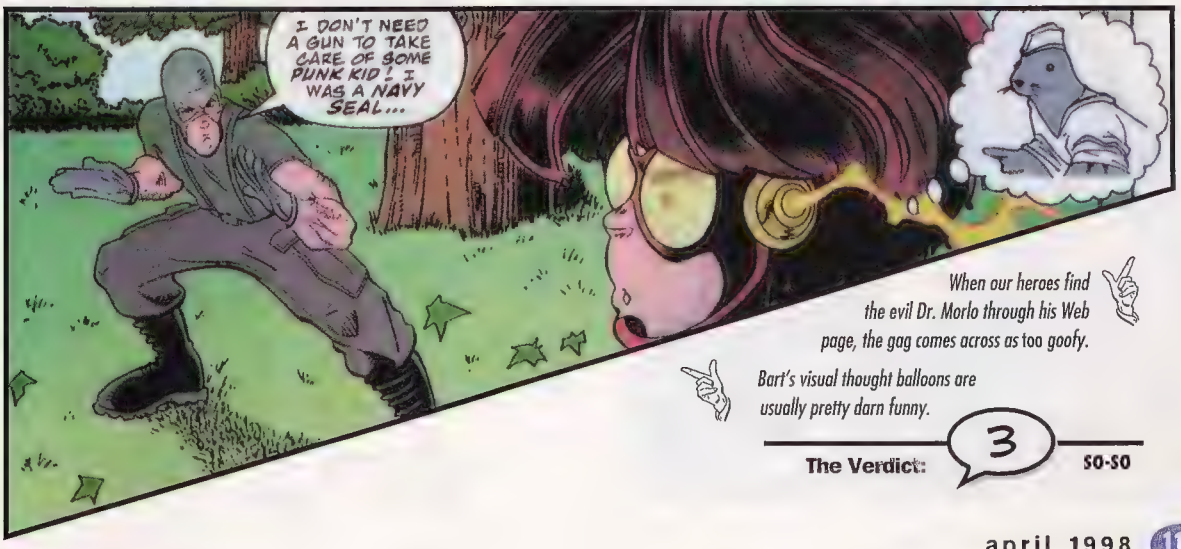


Then there are the times when the book tries to get serious—like when Bart's friend Preston visits his mom in a mental hospital (#32)—but they just don't work. Rather than feeling for the characters, you're left wondering what such awkward moments are doing in a fluffy slapstick title.

And the villains Impulse faces are pretty sad. White Lightning's a chick with a big arsenal of guns. Dr. Morlo, Max Mercury's arch-foe, is a wacky mad scientist with all sorts of weird gadgets and gizmos. Without "real" villains to challenge Impulse, our hero gets boring real fast.

The Buzz: Word has it that Impulse co-creator Mark Waid will return to this title, which would certainly infuse it with what made the book initially successful.

The Skinny: *Impulse* can certainly be funny, but that's about it. A lack of seriousness, decent villains and character depth keeps you from really caring about anyone in this title.



When our heroes find the evil Dr. Morlo through his Web page, the gag comes across as too goofy.

Bart's visual thought balloons are usually pretty darn funny.

The Verdict: 3 SO-SO

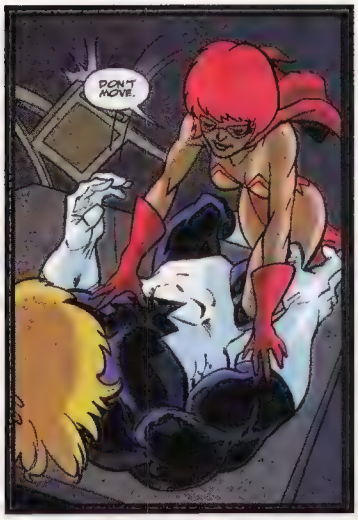
YOUNG HEROES IN LOVE

When superheroes meet 'The Real World'

Issues Reviewed: #1-#9
Genre: Superhero action/romance
Publisher: DC Comics
Creative Team: Dan Raspler, Dev Madan and Keith Champagne
Price/Frequency: $1.95/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Bonfire, Frostbite, Off-Ramp, Thunderhead, Monstergirl, Zip-Kid and Junior are the horniest group of champions in the DC Universe, manipulated by their leader Hard Drive into joining the new superteam called The Young Heroes.

The Good: What a superhero soap opera! It has a "real world" feel, yet the only difference is this shows what it would be like if youngpeople actually had superpowers. It's fun to watch the title's grass-roots characters jokingly bumble along, worrying more about dating a teammate than clobbering bad guys. Situations such as Thunderhead's attempt at using the miniature hero Junior to swipe a candy bar from a vending machine (issue #7) are good for lots of laughs.



The book also doesn't take itself seriously. Characters will occasionally break the fourth wall, realizing they are merely characters in a comic book. Before Junior recounts his origin (issue #6), Off-Ramp asks to keep it to only a few panels.

Also, since this is a soap opera, and smutty as it sounds, it's fun trying to figure out who's going to end up in bed with whom. Will Bonfire stay in bed with Frostbite or go with Thunderhead—or both? Or neither? Will Zip-Kid stay with her jackass boyfriend? You'll feel just a little dirty, but you'll enjoy it.

Plus, the clean art gives the book an animated feel that helps maintain the book's funny and lighthearted tone.

The Bad: Trouble is, much as we liked the seedy romances, there's little story beyond them. The book needs more action, and there are too many issues with unexciting, generic villains (like a mummy in issue #3) or no villains at all. Readers are left kinda clueless as to the book's direction.

There are also a couple of plot elements left dangling. The book barely scratches the surface about what the characters do in their personal lives; these characters are interesting, but let us care about them more through their alter egos. And as cool as Hard Drive's manipulating ways are, it's taking too long to get to his motives. And Monstergirl's counter-manipulating, for that matter.

Finally, the book's harmless-looking title and the otherwise cartoonish art is a bit misleading. This is a mature book with quite a few blatant sex references—but you wouldn't know it, looking at most covers.

The Buzz: Sales have been kinda blah, but expect some controversy when two male members of the team look at pursuing a relationship.

The Skinny: This is a good soap opera comic book. But the comic needs to follow through on more personal drama, diabolical villains and plot development to make it a *great* soap opera comic book.

While the art is great, its "animated" cartoony style is deceiving, since the book's sexy nature is aimed for mature readers.

When Thunderhead (center) uses Junior to scam a candy bar, it adds to the book's humorous "real-world" quality.

The Verdict: 4 GOOD

THE SKINNY

DESPERADOES

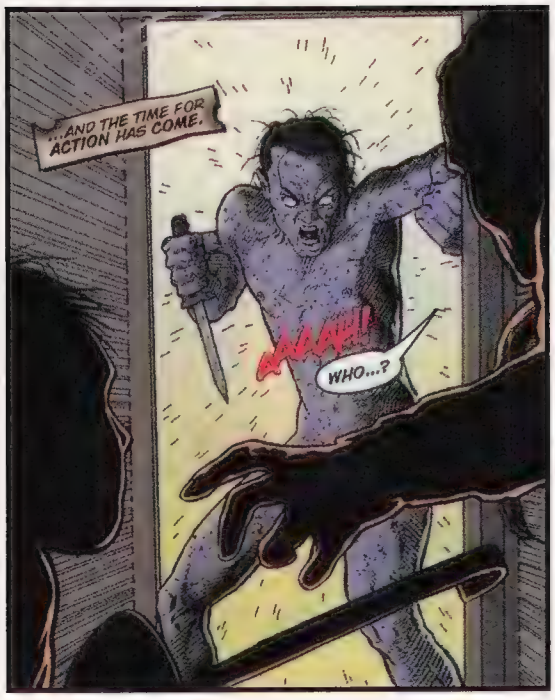
The 'X-Files' of the Wild West

Issues Reviewed: #1-#4
Genre: Western/supernatural
Publisher: Image/Homage Comics
Creative Team: Jeff Mariotte and John Cassaday
Price/Frequency: $2.50/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Set in the Wild West, Gideon Brood, Jerome Betts and Abby Degrazia are three rogues on the trail of a bizarre serial killer named Leander Peik. But on *their* trail is a posse that wants to bring them to justice for their involvement in an accidental murder. Running from the law, this trio metes out justice the best they can.

The Good: This book isn't cliché—at least for the most part (see "The Bad"). The script, art and design all work together to give this book an awesome Western feel. Little details such as captions looking like old-style notebook pages go a long way, and it helps that the main characters are both noble and ruthless, adding to an atmosphere of the "law of the West."

Just as enjoyable are the main characters, who, we learn, are full of depth. Rather than hiding character information, *Desperadoes* gives a different character's background story each issue—and they're all interesting. Details such as Jerome's near-hanging (issue #2) and Abby's experience as a prostitute (issue #3) make it easy for readers to understand their motivations for finding Peik.



Also, with its paranormal angle, this book has some truly chilling moments, such as when Gideon finds his son skinned like an animal (issue #1). It's creepy as hell when dead animals are always left in Peik's wake. And Peik's sick reason for killing is disturbing. This is truly "The X-Files" in the West.

Finally, writer Mariotte deserves kudos for doing his research, throwing in helpful tidbits about historical settings and events and giving advice on how to survive a gunfight. We'll keep it in mind.

The Bad: The ending fizzles in a big way. Despite a great story build-up with interesting characters, *Desperadoes* finishes too neatly in an anti-climactic way. Peik is a truly evil and slippery villain who, in the end, is simply shot in the back and killed in one panel's time. When the Apache tribe saves the heroes' butts a *second* time in #4 (the first time happened in issue #3), it's predictable and unoriginal. Even the heroes' decision to become paranormal investigators at the very end seems very rushed and last-minute. Hopefully, future stories will deliver in the end...but this ending was a let-down.

The Ugly: ...just kidding.

The Buzz: Not much. But with issue #5 shipping in April, followed by a trade paperback of #1-#4 in June, this series should stay monthly afterward.

The Skinny: Who would've thought a Western could work these days? Despite an anti-climactic ending, great characters and a truly Western feel make *Desperadoes* a surprisingly good read. We look forward to reading more.

Desperadoes is full of neat Western factoids, making it a legit read.

The serial killer Peik is chillingly evil, mixing insanity with a supernatural twist.

The Verdict: 4 GOOD

PICKS

THE MUST-READ COMICS SHIPPING IN MARCH

AKIKO #24

THE AVENGERS #4

TITLES DENOTED WITH AN **MR** CONTAIN MATERIAL THAT'S SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS.

AKIKO #24

SIRIUS Is there a Heaven for soulless automatons? The robotic Gax and his cybernetic pals don't wanna know the answer to that one, so they race to build a ship to escape the doomed spacestation Fognon-6. But if they make it out alive, they're going to have to...shudder...get real jobs, and the interplanetary robot market on Buspettin might just be their first stop. By Mark Crilley. **$2.95**

AQUAMAN #44

DC COMICS Sun, sand, superheroes and a savage sea beast await the unfortunate souls inhabiting a coastal resort town. With a mad monster running amok, it's up to Sentinel and the Golden Age Flash to bring it down. But when Aquaman finally rears his ugly head, it turns out he's on the monster's side. Ain't that just like a man with a hook for a hand? By Peter David, "Babylon 5" actor Bill Mumy, Jim Calafiore and Peter Palmiotti. **$1.95**

THE AVENGERS #4

MARVEL Join the few, the proud, the Avengers as they decide on the team's final roster. Amid much speculation, our crack *Wizard* spies (and that Kurt Busiek writer guy) have deduced two things: There'll be a new member who debuted outside the Marvel Universe proper, and the new Avengers will meet their first enemy in a revitalized Whirlwind, who's somehow tied to the abomination we lovingly call "Heroes Reborn." By Busiek, George Pérez and Al Vey. **$1.99**

BONE #32

CARTOON BOOKS There's a titanic tussle brewing, and the Eastern mountains are gonna shake like the San Andreas fault when two behemoths (by the names of Kingdok and Roque Jaw) stomp each other flat. Meanwhile, the rat creature cub Bartleby is growing up, and both he and the Bone cousins face some tough choices. By Jeff Smith, who says, "The storyline in the last five issues has been about nature, the nature of the characters—some of them are rat creatures, some of them are forest animals. There's the nature of the harsh reality of life in the mountains versus the life down in the valley. And the decision Bartleby has to make: Is he going to follow his nature and return to the rat creatures, where he comes from, or return to the valley with the Bones?" **$2.95**

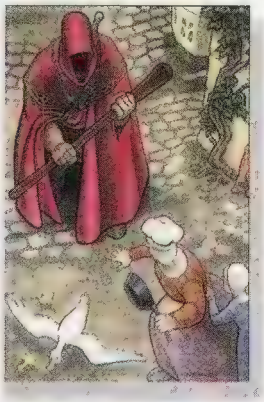
CAPTAIN AMERICA #5

MARVEL Boys and girls, it's vendetta time! Captain America's got a score to settle with the terrorist group HYDRA, so he sets out to destroy the hive of villainy and wretchedness once and for all. But, as the goons in HYDRA are fond of saying, if you cut off one of HYDRA's heads, another grows back in its place. Too bad the same can't be said for Cap. By Mark Waid, Ron Garney and Bob Wiacek. **$1.99**

CASTLE WAITING #5

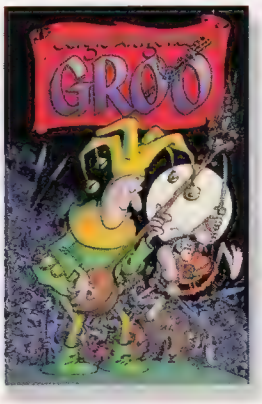
OLIO Lady Jain's just given birth to a green, pig-faced baby and everybody in the castle's partying like it's on sale for $19.99. Now, a mysterious stranger who knows a lot about Jain's past (and who may or may not be the father of her child) is standing at the fortress gates, demanding entrance. Y'know, strong locks and rocket launchers were designed for just such an emergency. By Linda Medley. **$2.95**

BONE #32



CASTLE WAITING #5

GREEN LANTERN #98



GROO #3

CHASE #4

DC COMICS Y'know, superpowered detective Cameron Chase hates superheroes more than we hate the French. And boy, is she in for a bad day, 'cause the Teen Titans, Booster Gold, Firehawk, the treacherous Clock King and his new team of superthugs all join in the fun, creating a good ol' fashioned riot. Yep, Chase really shoulda called in sick. By D. Curtis Johnson, J.H. Williams III and Mick Gray. **$2.50**

CONCRETE: STRANGE ARMOR #4 (OF 5)

DARK HORSE Stranger things have happened, but only on the cover of the *National Enquirer*. After being abducted by aliens and having his mind put into a concrete body, Ron Lithgow is now being coerced into a spy's life, while some 8-year-old kid is having a birthday party and a coal mine disaster looms on the horizon like some kind of thing that...er...looms. By Paul Chadwick. **$2.95**

DANGER GIRL #1

CLIFFHANGER/IMAGE Adventure? Excitement? A Jedi craves not these things. But adventurer Abbey Chase does, and when she joins the secret all-girl organization named "Danger Girl," she...ah, heck, we'll let creator J. Scott Campbell tell this tale. "By the end of the first issue, [Chase] is on her first mission with the rest of the Danger Girls, and this mission takes her to Paris, France. They're basically supposed to track an evil agent who's an arms dealer, and they set up surveillance. Basically, all Hell ends up breaking loose and there's a large chase scene through the streets of Paris." By Campbell, Andy Hartnell and Alex Garner. **$2.95**

FANTASTIC FOUR #5

MARVEL Remember the kindly monks who gave Dr. Doom his armor? Well, one of them wasn't so kindly—his name is Crucible, and when the Fantastic Four meet up with him, they might be hard-pressed to figure out if he's the heir apparent to Doom's legacy, or just another silly man in an iron mask. By Chris Claremont, Scott Lobdell, Salvador Larroca and Art Thibert. "We'll be returning some old friends to the FF's lives, including a couple of surprise appearances," Claremont says. "Characters you don't expect, and situations which will have repercussions down the line. Suffice it to say Franklin's activities in 'Heroes Reborn' and 'Heroes Return' have not gone unnoticed. The bigger the bang, the more attentive the response, let us say." **$1.99**

THE FLASH #137

DC COMICS "Human Race," Part 2 (of 3). Feet, don't fail the Flash now. The Scarlet Speedster's in the race of his life, chugging across space and time against an ultra-fast alien. The malevolent beings who set up the contest have vowed to destroy the loser's home planet, so even if Flash wins, billions will die. Oh, yeah, life's fair. By Grant Morrison, Mark Millar, Paul Ryan and John Nyberg. **$1.95**

GREEN LANTERN #98

DC COMICS "Future Shock," Part 1 (of 2). Here's a hint for Kyle Rayner, the current Green Lantern: Don't drop the soap in the prison shower. When GL travels to the distant future, he's promptly arrested for being a member of the outlawed Green Lantern Corps and subsequently freed from bondage (Oooh!) by the Legion of Super-Heroes. Stuck in the 30th century, Lantern vows to restore the Corps' honor, and with the help of an Oan, he just might do that. By Ron Marz, Darryl Banks and Terry Austin. *Green Lantern & Sentinel: Heart of Darkness* #3 (of 3) concludes the series as Sentinel scuffles with Jade, while Green Lantern takes on her brother Obsidian. By Ron Marz, Paul Pelletier and Dan Davis. **$1.95 EACH**

GROO #3 (OF 4)

DARK HORSE His brains'd get him into Harvard, but his sword would get him expelled. The normally abnormally stupid barbarian Groo has become a genius and no one can figure out why. Now, the rogues Pal and Drumm want to find out why Groo's intellect has blossomed and, more importantly, how they can exploit him. By Sergio Aragonés and Mark Evanier. **$2.95**

READ THIS BOOK!

PREACHER #37

VERTIGO/DC COMICS "War in the Sun," Part 4 (of 4). In the desert where John Wayne filmed his movies, vultures are preparin' for a full continental breakfast. Y'see, Jesse Custer and his pals Cassidy the Irish vampire and girlfriend Tulip are stuck in Monument Valley for the mother of all battles against The Saint of Killers, Starr and maybe God himself. By Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon. Ennis says, "This is where everything turns around. Some of the things we've been building in the past few issues come to a head. This is where the entire status quo changes. After 'War in the Sun,' just about everyone is in as bad a situation as they can possibly be. There's going to be a lot of new characters coming up—well, both new characters and also some old characters that people may have thought they were never going to see again. People who you last saw being, say, dragged away to be shot through the head might just be coming back." **MR $2.50**

HITMAN #26

DC COMICS "Who Dares Wins," Part 4 (of 5). The red rain falling on Gotham? It ain't corn syrup. It ain't stage blood, either. It's corpuscles, baby. Special Air Service (SAS) agents holding a Gulf War grudge are out to kill superpowered assassin Tommy Monaghan and his *amigo* Natt the Hat. What good are two people against an army? Apparently not much… By Garth Ennis, John McCrea and Garry Leach. **$2.25**

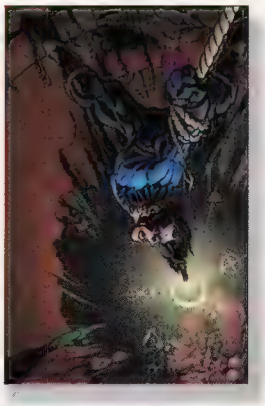
IRON MAN #4

MARVEL Dormant volcano turned tourist paradise Isle Suerte (translation: "Lucky Island") becomes a villain's dream when Tony Stark and a host of rich executives gather to unveil Stark's super-spiffy Web browser. With all those *bourgeois* suits in one place, the scumtastic Firebrand cries havoc, lets slip the dogs of war and maybe takes a few hostages. By Kurt Busiek, Sean Chen and Eric J. Cannon. **$1.99**

JLA #18

DC COMICS Seven's an unlucky number for the Justice League: Seven airplanes are set on a collision course with each other, seven superbaddies are set to sack the White House and seven skyscrapers soon will 'splode. The evil Dr. Julian September is behind the mayhem, but the League might be too busy stopping the disasters to foil his evil scheme. By Mark Waid, Howard Porter and John Dell. Waid says, "In issue #18, the Justice League is up against a new villain named Julian September. He's found a way to warp probabilities, so that anything can happen. With a wave of his wand, as improbable as it may be, he can be the president of the U.S., the premier of Russia or the greatest supervillain ever, and the Justice Leaguers have to deal with this. And all the while, for some mysterious reason, they're beginning to fade away, one at a time." **$1.95**

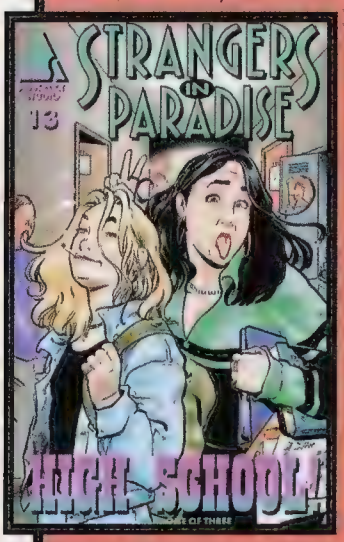
HITMAN #26


NIGHTWING #20

READ THIS BOOK!

STRANGERS IN PARADISE #13

ABSTRACT STUDIO "High School," Part 1 (of 3). We can honestly say that high school was the best five to seven years of our lives. The dysfunctional duo of Francine and Katchoo might think otherwise—between Francine's bad reputation and Katchoo's repeated suspensions, the girls barely made it out of school alive. And if school was bad, Katchoo's abusive home life was probably worse. By Terry Moore, who says, "We're going to look at the girls at a time when they did not hide their emotions so much. We're going to see what shaped these girls—Francine's relationship with her father and how it shaped her to be the way she is with men today. Katchoo's home life, which greatly influenced the way she is today. Not only are we going to be able to laugh at Francine's extended family, we're also going to see some very key moments. And that's really why I'm doing this." **$2.75**



JLA: YEAR ONE #5 (OF 12)

DC COMICS The newly formed Justice League faces a stiff test in the form of the Brotherhood of Evil! Their grade? Unsatisfactory, and there ain't no make-up test, no extra credit, no nothing. Now, only the weird-ass heroes of the Doom Patrol can save the five fledgling Justice Leaguers. Hoo boy. By Mark Waid, Brian Augustyn and Barry Kitson. **$1.95**

KA-ZAR #13

MARVEL Mark Waid gets paid a lot more money to write *Ka-Zar* than we do to write this column, so we'll let him tell you about this issue while we go steal paper towels from the bathroom. "Things are beginning to come to a head in issue #13," Waid says. "The basic notion is that the High Evolutionary has taken [Ka-Zar's wife] Shanna—who now has all sorts of terraforming powers—under his wing and has designs on her. Ka-Zar can't tell if they're romantic or otherwise, but either way, he doesn't like it. Unfortunately, he's not in any position to interfere; he's completely lost face in the Savage Land because of what he let happen with Thanos." By Waid and Aaron Lopresti. **$1.99**

MAJOR BUMMER #10

DC COMICS To bury the freakish muscle-monster Nunzio, they're gonna need a really big coffin. And a really big shovel. And a really big hole. After the muscle-laden slacker Lou Martin sends Nunzio to his oversized grave, he's put on trial for murder—but is his enemy really dead? Like the man says, don't believe the hype. By John Arcudi, Doug Mahnke and Tom Nguyen. **$2.50**

NIGHTWING #20

DC COMICS After a devastating earthquake wrecks Gotham City, Nightwing and Robin (with some help from computer whiz Oracle) are forced to rescue Batman from a suffocating death. And where, you may ask, *is* the Batman? He's at home, buried in the rubble of the Batcave. Plus, Commissioner Gordon comes to grips with the massive destruction leveled upon his once-fair city. By Chuck Dixon, Scott McDaniel and Karl Story. **$1.95**

POISON ELVES #33

SIRIUS Elves Jace and Lusipher, once bitter enemies, have banded

together for an alliance of convenience. While they try escaping Mandratha, they're set upon by an assassin and lose track of each other. While Jace's whereabouts are uncertain, Lusipher hides out with a wizard who gives his guest anonymity with a shocking disguise. By Drew Hayes. **$2.50**

QUANTUM AND WOODY #14

ACCLAIM Energy-based supergoof Woody and his straight-laced partner Quantum battle the foul and devious Terence Magnum, who's declared war on the so-called "world's worst superhero team." When the normally placid Woody attacks Magnum, Quantum has to step in to prevent his partner from committing murder. By Christopher Priest, MD Bright and Greg Adams. **$2.50**

ROBIN #53

DC COMICS As part of the groundbreaking (Literally!) storyline "Cataclysm," Robin hunts down (And finds!) the villainous piece of cattle dung responsible for the Gotham City earthquake. Batman and Nightwing'll find themselves pressed into action to save Gotham's mayor from the villain's similiarly dungish henchmen. By Chuck Dixon, Staz Johnson and Stan Woch. **$1.95**

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE #62

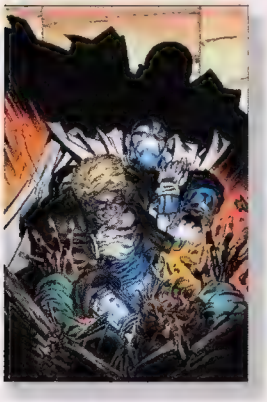
VERTIGO/DC COMICS "The City," Part 2 (of 4). Being the love interest of the Golden Age Sandman (Wesley Dodds) has its disadvantages, chief among them an overabundance of mysteries. In this self-contained tale, Dian Belmont, the Sandman's significant other, travels to the deep pit known as Staten Island to locate a gifted author who's gone AWOL. Can Belmont unravel the mystery without her beau? Girl power, baby! By Steven T. Seagle and Guy Davis. **MR $2.50**

SAVAGE DRAGON #47

IMAGE Democracy at work: When some tinpot dictator scumbag in a third-world cesspool rattles his sabers, the Special Operations Strike Force (SOS) is called in to stomp the goon flatter than year-old soder pop. What the Strike Force doesn't know is that the dictator's more powerful than he looks. He's planning to take over the world, and our heroes are in deep doo-doo. **$2.50**

THUNDERBOLTS #14

MARVEL Hold hands, for the day of redemption has come! Maybe. The villains turned *faux* heroes The Thunderbolts (formerly the Masters of Evil) have a chance to polish their tarnished images by defeating an invasion army from Kosmos. That is, if they choose to make a stand. By Kurt Busiek, Mark Bagley and Scott Hanna. **$1.99**



QUANTUM AND WOODY #14

SAVAGE DRAGON #47

PAPERBACK PICKS

Trade Paperbacks You Won't Wanna Miss

Captain America: Man Without a Country (Marvel) For a man like Captain America, exile might be worse than death. When the U.S. president is shown a videotape featuring Cap in cahoots with his nemesis the Red Skull, he strips America's greatest hero of his costumed identity—and his citizenship. Homeless, the ex-Captain travels to Asia, where he learns the robotic Machinesmith is responsible for his troubles, and that to exonerate himself, he'll need to defy his sentence of exile. This paperback reprints *Captain America* #450-#453. By Mark Waid, Ron Garney and Scott Koblish. **$12.99**

Grandson of Origins of Marvel Comics (Marvel) Throw open the dark, dark closet of secrecy to shed light on the origins of some of Marvel Comics' most popular heroes. Captain America, Ka-Zar, Professor X and the Sub-Mariner have their origin stories reprinted in this rather cool 256-page, full-color book. By Stan Lee, Jack Kirby and a slew of other creators. **$24.99**

Underworld Unleashed (DC Comics) ▼ Neron the demon makes the DC villains an offer they can't refuse: he'll give them power enough to defeat their greatest enemies (and gain respect)...but only if they cough up their individual souls. For the villains, the price is right, and DC's heroes find themselves in it deep, so much so that a hero strikes a deal with Neron himself. This paperback collects the entire *Underworld Unleashed* mini-series, plus the one-shot *Underworld Unleashed: Abyss—Hell's Sentinel* #1. By Mark Waid, Scott Peterson, Howard Porter and others. **$12.95**

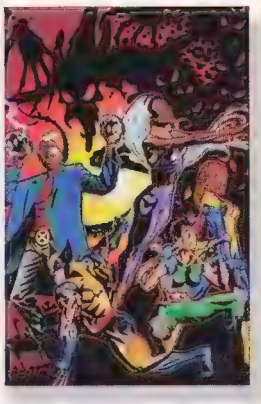
TRANSMETROPOLITAN #9

HELIX/DC COMICS When reporter Spider Jerusalem travels to Reservation, where diverse cultures are stored in cryogenic stasis like museum exhibits, he uncovers a new movement based around body modification. Even worse, though, he tries asking a woman out on a date. By Warren Ellis, Darick Robertson and Rodney Ramos. **MR $2.50**

UNCANNY X-MEN #355

MARVEL "North and South," Part 2 (of 2). It's America's worst fear—a Canadian invasion! The X-Men find themselves under the

UNCANNY X-MEN #355



X-MEN #75

scorching onslaught of Alpha Flight, who wanna arrest Wolverine and bring him to their unwilling accomplice Sauron. Part one of this storyline, in February's *Alpha Flight* #9, showed the battle from Alpha Flight's point-of-view; part two reveals the X-Men's side. Across the continent (in Alaska), Cyclops and his wife Jean find their love sorely tested when…you didn't think we'd spoil the surprise, did you? By Steven T. Seagle, Chris Bachalo and Tim Townsend. Seagle says, "Jean is certainly sporting some new duds that have Cyclops very concerned. And that leads into next issue, which kind of has a reunion theme. It's not like marital problems—they're not getting divorced, but it might be worse than that." **$1.99**

WITCHCRAFT: LA TERREUR #2 (OF 3)

VERTIGO/DC COMICS While the French (Bah!) Revolution rages throughout Paris, young Isadore Hibbert begins studying black magic under the tutelage of an experienced warlock. As Hibbert travels down this dark road, she finds herself becoming more and more alienated from her friends, as well as calling a lot of attention to herself. By James Robinson, Michael Zulli and Vince Locke. **MR $2.50**

X-MEN #75

MARVEL Hearty welcomes are in order as the mutants Maggott, Marrow and Dr. Reyes are officially inducted into the X-Men. While the team celebrates its new additions, the N'Garai demons (from waaay back in *Uncanny X-Men* #143) show up, and they're not collecting donations from Greenpeace, if you can catch our meaning. By Joe Kelly, German Garcia and Art Thibert. **$2.99**

YOUNG HEROES IN LOVE #12

DC COMICS Hard Drive, the Young Heroes' chunky mind-manipulating leader, is a conundrum wrapped in a riddle stuck into one of those Chinese metal boxes that, when opened, reveal…a donut. Is Hard Drive alive or dead or somewhere in between? Is he even Hard Drive at all? This issue promises to uncover *all* the answers. By Dan Raspler, Dev Madan and Keith Champagne. "All the mysteries surrounding Hard Drive are revealed, and he completely loses it and goes nuts," Raspler says. "There's a knock-down, drag-out fight between him and the team, and only one is left standing." Raspler also drops these hints: a major character leaves the team this issue, something weird happens between two male Heroes in #13, a new character will join the team and Hard Drive "is revealed to be the single most powerful character in the DC Universe." **$1.95** W

Also shipping in March

Alpha Flight #10 (Marvel)
When Alpha Flight's tossed into the mysterious Prometheus Pit, things just can't be good. **$1.99**

Batman Books (DC Comics)
Quakemaster (*snicker*) has leveled Gotham City and the *original* Dynamic Duo (Batman and Dick Grayson) hunts for him in *Batman* #554. Over in *Detective Comics* #721, Batman continues his Quakemaster hunt, but gets sidetracked by earthquake victims and the Huntress. **$1.95 each**

Darkchylde #0 (Homage/Image)
Sultry devil-child Ariel Chylde is on the lam with only two demons to protect her. Heaven help us. **$2.50**

The Darkness #14 (Top Cow/Image)
Someone new is wielding the Angelus power, and hitman Jackie Estacado teams up with some enemies to fight her and save Don Franchetti's life. **$2.50**

Divine Right #6 (WildStorm/Image)
College student-turned-superhuman Max Faraday learns where he got his powers and discovers where his true love's being held captive. **$2.50**

Gen^{13} Books (WildStorm/Image)
Special Agent Morgan goes hunting for dirty secrets about Gen^{12} in *Gen^{12}* #2, and in *Gen^{13}* #27 the Gen^{13} kids are grounded by their mentor Lynch, which doesn't deter Freefall from searching for her stepmom. **$2.50 each**

Spawn #72 (Todd McFarlane Productions/Image)
What happens when the dead and undead combine to form a new life? Beats us, but it happens in Spawn Alley. **$1.95**

Spider-Man Books (Marvel)
Spider-Man, who's got a bounty on his head, decides to adopt four all-new identities. Web-head becomes Hornet in *Sensational Spider-Man* #27, Ricochet in *Amazing Spider-Man* #434, Dusk in *Peter Parker: Spider-Man* #91 and Prodigy in *Spectacular Spider-Man* #257. Somebody have mercy on our souls. **$1.99 each**

Star Trek: The Next Generation/X-Men: Second Contact (Marvel)
The crew of the *Enterprise-E* boldly goes back in time, visits the X-Men and tangles with the Borg and the Sentinels. **$4.99**

Star Wars Books (Dark Horse)
Leia, Han and Chewbacca guest-star in *Star Wars: X-Wing Rogue Squadron—Masquerade* #1. *Star Wars: Crimson Empire* #4 has the Rebels fleeing from their not-so-secret base, while the evil Jedi C'Baoth's cloning schemes come to a head in *Star Wars: The Last Command* #4. And finally, android Guri avoids the clutches of the vile bounty hunter Kar Yang in *Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire—Evolution* #2. **$2.95 each**

Superman Books (DC Comics)
A host of heroes teams up to battle the Millennium Giants in Markovia and under the seas in *Adventures of Superman* #557, with the battle moving to Metropolis in *Action Comics* #744. And, surprise, Supermen Red and Blue triumph over the Giants in *Superman: The Man of Steel* #79, and deal with the consequences in *Superman* #135. **$1.95 each**

Tales of the Darkness #1 (Top Cow/Image)
Hitman Jackie Estacado's not the first man, nor will he be the last, to wield the Darkness power. Learn about the other men who tried to control this tremendous force. **$2.95**

Wolverine #124 (Marvel)
What has six claws, a star and is a combined 320 years old? Try Wolverine and his co-star Captain America. **$1.99** ●

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In its twelfth year, the South By Southwest Music and Media Conference and Festival continues to attract the international music industry to Austin, Texas every March for five days of music and conversation. Performing artists have included Beck, Tony Bennett, George Clinton, The Fugees, Willie Nelson, Joan Osborne, Iggy Pop and many new, upcoming artists.

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Dynamic Forces and Graphitti Designs Present:

The "Avengers Assemble" Contest

CONTEST

Earth's Mightiest Heroes are undergoing a face lift and soon the latest and greatest Avengers roster will be unveiled. But we thought we'd give you super-genius readers the chance to outdo those Marvel masters by letting you create your own Avengers dream team.

Grand Prize (1):

The ultimate Avenger wins an original page of George Pérez art from *Avengers* #4 (third series), a copy of the *Avengers* #1 (third series) alternate cover signed by Pérez, a copy of *Avengers* #4 (third series) signed by Pérez and an Avengers T-shirt.

First Prize (20):

Twenty Avengerinos will net a copy of the *Avengers* #1 (third series) alternate cover signed by George Pérez, a copy of *Avengers* #4 (third series) signed by Pérez and an Avengers T-shirt.

Graphitti DESIGNS

DYNAMIC FORCES

This contest is sponsored by Dynamic Forces and Graphitti Designs, Earth's Mightiest contest sponsors.

What you do is jot down the six Marvel characters that you think should be members of the Avengers. Then, write 100 words (or less) why you think these heroes would be the ultimate fighting team. You can choose any characters you want, just make sure you justify their membership. We'll play review board and determine which team reigns supreme. That person gets the keys to Avengers Mansion. (Okay, not really—but he'll get some nifty prizes.)

Fill this out, attach your entry and put it in an envelope. Send to: "Avengers Assemble!" Contest, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Matt Murdock Stuff

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Entertainment, Dynamic Forces, Graphitti Designs, their immediate families and any members of the fame-ass Great Lakes Avengers. Who come up with that, idea? Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach the form or card to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: "Avengers Assemble!" Contest, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. Did you forget that Gilgamesh used to be an Avenger? We sure did. All entries become property of Wizard Entertainment and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by April 30, 1998.** Wizard is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, mutilated or repulsor-rayed entries. Winners will be selected based on originality and creativity by Wizard Entertainment. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Winners will be notified no later than June 4, 1998. If an entrant, having been declared as a winner, does not accept the prize or the prize notification is undeliverable, another entry will be selected. In the event that a prize is not available or it becomes impossible for the sponsor to award the prize which has been designated, the sponsor retains the right to substitute a prize or product of equal value in the winner. Determination of whether a prize or product is of equal value is in the sole discretion of the sponsor. Winning entries will be selected on or about May 14, 1998.

For a list of winners, available after May 14, 1998, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: "Avengers Assemble!" Winners List, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

"Avengers Assemble" Contest Entry Form

DEADLINE IS APRIL 30, 1998!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Did you attach your entry?

TRAILER PARK

***Wizard*'s column about Hollywood and TV and stuff like that**

PUT X-MEN ON FANS' X-MAS LIST FOR '99

By Rob Allstetter

The long-awaited **"X-Men"** film appears to be closer to becoming a reality for 20th Century Fox and producer Lauren Shuler-Donner. At one time targeted for the summer of 1995, "X-Men" now could reach theaters before the turn of the century.

Director **Bryan Singer**, whose credits include "The Usual Suspects" and the upcoming "Apt Pupil," told *Wizard* that he is working on final touches to the "X-Men" script with writer Ed Solomon ("Men in Black") and hopes to put Marvel's mutants before the cameras by September.

"The hopeful release is either late summer or Christmas '99—X-Mas '99," Singer said, enjoying the pun. "I'm personally shooting for X-Mas '99 because I don't think anything like this should be rushed. But it could be sooner."

In his first extensive "X-Men" interview, Singer revealed that the movie X-team will include **Professor Xavier**, **Wolverine**, **Storm**, **Jean Grey**, **Cyclops**, **Rogue** and **Beast**. "There might be more," Singer noted.

Plot details are minimal, but the movie will depict an early adventure of the team.

"It's not exactly the origin of the X-Men, but it takes place in the beginning," Singer said. "It deals with a lot of the original characters from the comic book series." That includes the film's villain, **Magneto**, and thus the comics' long-running theme of mutant bigotry.

"Ordinarily, villains have a one-dimensional agenda—economic gain, world domination, etc.," Singer said. "In the case of Magneto, his intentions for mutantkind are inherently good.

"He takes his agenda, his view of mutantkind's place in the world, too selfishly. That's what makes him a villain. He's not necessarily an evil man. His family

WHAT ABOUT WOLVIE?

Who do fans think would play the best, toughest, most bad-ass Wolverine in the upcoming X-Men movie? Through a poll on Wizard World on America Online (Keyword: Wizard), the winner of the hunt is Robert De Niro ("Cape Fear"), beating out another "lethal weapon," Mel Gibson ("Braveheart") for top honors. Gary Sinise ("Forrest Gump"), Harvey Keitel ("Pulp Fiction," 11 percent), rocker Glenn Danzig (9 percent) and Robin Williams ("Good Will Hunting," 3 percent) also got votes.

Everett Collection

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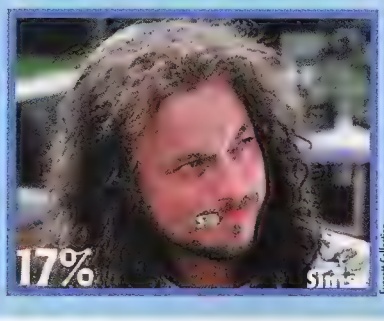

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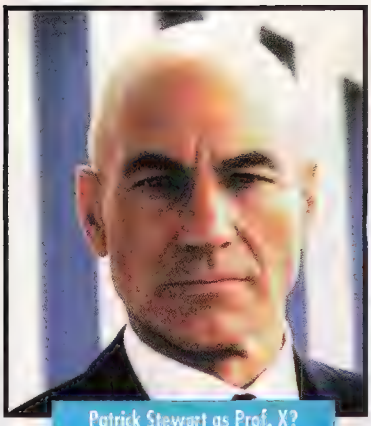


Everett Collection

Patrick Stewart as Prof. X?

was killed in the Holocaust and he has a lot of resentment toward mankind in general. He sees the coming of a future holocaust for his kind and does what he thinks is the right thing."

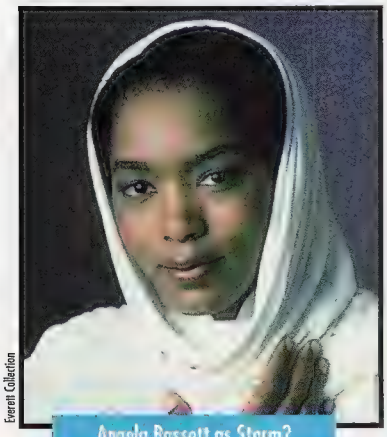
Casting for "X-Men" will likely take place this spring. Singer confirmed he has spoken with **Patrick Stewart**, best known as Captain Jean-Luc Picard from "Star Trek: The Next Generation," about playing another bald authority figure: Professor X.

"I've always thought Patrick Stewart was a really terrific idea for Professor Charles Xavier," Singer said. "He's not incredibly familiar with X-Men, but he's become more familiar about it. But, until there's a script and until you see how schedules work out, you have no clue on these things."

Another name popping up is **Angela Bassett** ("Waiting to Exhale") as Storm. "She's expressed interest, and I think she's a wonderful actress," Singer said.

Certainly, Wolverine is a crucial character, and thus the subject of the most widespread speculation. Singer labeled Internet reports, which have centered on **Gary Sinise**, as speculation, and said he remains open-minded about the part.

"I'm looking at all ages," Singer said. "With his healing factor, I'm establishing how old he *could* be, but physically, with his body, I'm actually more interested in the character. I'm looking for a guy who is that character, who *is* Wolverine."



Everett Collection

Angela Bassett as Storm?

With a cast loaded with superpowered superheroes, "X-Men" figures to be an expensive movie with lots of special effects. Singer has working knowledge of computer-generated images (CGI), having once developed a science-fiction project that wasn't realized. He said he feels up to the technological challenge.

"I've been doing a lot of research," Singer said. "I was on the set of 'Titanic' in Mexico. I visited the set of the new 'Star Wars.' I spent a day there and have had dialogues with **George Lucas** subsequently."

Despite the effects, Singer said "X-Men" isn't a different kind of filmmaking than "The Usual Suspects."

"It really isn't," Singer said. "Lucas will be the first person to tell you. It's really about the movie. The key is to never let the special effects bog you down. It's never about the effects; it's about the story."

And the story will be key, because comic book movies seem to bust more than boom. For every "Batman" or "Men in Black," there's a "Judge Dredd," "Tank Girl" or "Steel." And as popular as the X-Men are in the comics community, the characters remain relatively unknown to the public. In fact, Singer said he's watched every episode of the "X-Men" animated series to help create an all-audiences version.

So, can the X-Men play in Peoria?

"It's very difficult, but I think it has all the elements to make it a fantastically mainstream, universal movie," Singer said. "It's a matter of bringing out the elements and making them clear and not muddling them—which is why I think Stan Lee, the Marvel people and 20th Century Fox are excited about me, because I'm not such an aficionado. I'm a new fan. What I'll do is I'll view it as something larger than the intricacies of the comic book.

"What you don't want is a terrible director who loves X-Men to come in and destroy it and totally screw it up."

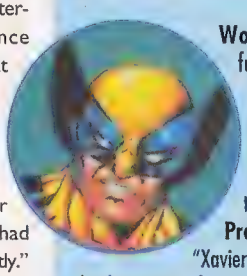
Singer said he feels he has the proper creative team to make "X-Men" the way it should be made.

"I want fans to be excited about the fact the movie is happening in this way," he said. "They've tried to get this project off the ground for 10 years. They've had many opportunities to make this movie the *wrong* way. I wouldn't be approaching it if a) I didn't think we could do it the right way; and b) [I didn't] really, really have a deep passion for it.

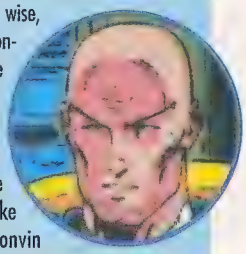
"And I'm a fan now. Who's to say that a guy can't become a fan when he's 30?"

EXTENDED FAMILY

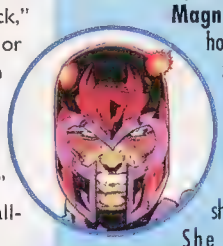
Director Bryan Singer won't reveal *all* of the characters scheduled to appear in "X-Men," but did confirm and comment on the following:



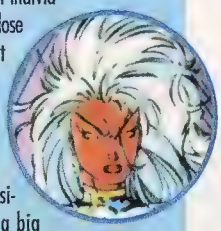
Wolverine: "He's cool. He's funny. He's angry—a lot. He doesn't know why. He's got built-in resentment, built into his bones. But he has great love, a lot of love. But it's all trapped inside."



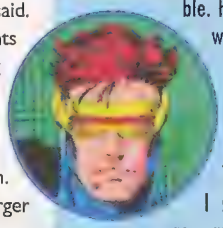
Professor Xavier: "Xavier is wise, but he's constantly questioning himself as all truly wise people do. He's always wondering, 'Am I doing the right thing?' He's the one I identify with. He's the leader. Creating a team is like making a film. You're convincing everyone to see your vision and work to make your vision. I get Charles Xavier."



Magneto: "Magneto is passionate, however misguided. Very charismatic, magnetic."

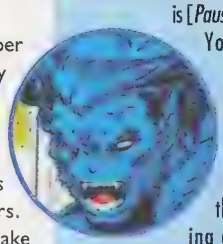


Storm: "Traditional. Devoted. She tucks her individualism close to her, but she's got it. She comes from a very proud culture."



Cyclops: "He's got a lot to prove. He's got to be responsible. He's got a big wheelchair to fill if, God forbid, something happens."

Jean Grey: "Jean Grey is like the right hand; she's Xavier's legs. That's how I see her as—an extension of him he can't be."



Beast: "Beast is great. Beast is [*Pauses*] Spock! You have to understand I'm a Spock freak. You have to understand Spock is the greatest character."

Rogue: "She's everything that's frightening and tragic about being a mutant. She's a beautiful, sexual woman who can do anything she wants—except touch somebody." ■ *RA*

NEW BATMAN CARTOON IN '98

You've watched the Dark Knight. Now get ready for the Tomorrow Knight. Kids' WB! has announced a new animated series, **"Batman Tomorrow,"** that will be part of its Saturday morning lineup this fall.

"Batman Tomorrow" will be produced by the Warner Bros. Animation team of Bruce Timm, Alan Burnett and Paul Dini that also produces "Batman" and "Superman." The series is set 50 years in Gotham City's future and features a teenaged Batman, who wears a red-winged supersuit with jet-gliding capabilities.

"It's basically Batman, the next generation," Timm said. "Bruce Wayne is too old to be Batman anymore. He's still active, but he's too old. So there's a teenager who becomes the new Batman, and Bruce helps him out."

Timm said the new series is a direct result of Kids' WB!'s interest in appealing to a younger target audience than the regular "Batman" series, which tends to reach viewers of teens and older.

"This was going to happen one way or the other, so I'd rather have somebody who cares about the property, like myself, Alan and Paul, to be in charge of it," Timm said.

"It seemed so commercial and such a knock-off," he continued. "But the more we started talking about it, the more excited we got about the show—the new villains and the more science fictional-type setting. And then I did the drawing of the new Batman and I went, 'That is cool!'"

Work has just begun on the first season's 13 episodes, and no casting has taken place. Timm said he hopes to get Kevin Conroy, the star of the animated "Batman," to do the voice of the elderly Bruce Wayne.

Timm pointed out "Batman Tomorrow" is a spinoff and isn't replacing "Batman," which will return with new episodes next fall, along with **"Superman."**

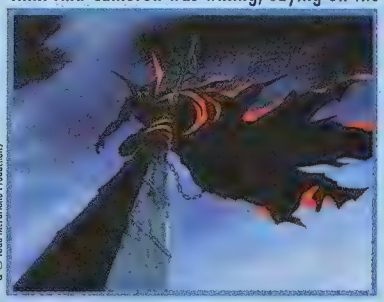
Timm hopes fans won't prejudge the series. "There's going to be hard-line traditional purists who are going to just totally rebel against the idea," Timm said, "but I hope they're watching, because we're going to be doing some really cool stuff."

Meet the next generation Batman in "Batman Tomorrow."

TRAILER TRACKS

WINNER OF THE MONTH: Animated **"Spawn."** More than 600,000 copies of the first season of the HBO series have been sold in home video. "The video division was like, 'Holy crap!'—their orders were going through the roof before they even sold any," said "Spawn" supervising director Eric Radomski. "It was a nice cherry on top of the dessert to see people who wanted to buy 'Spawn,' too."

LOSERS OF THE MONTH: **Spider-Man** fans. On the heels of his fantastically successful "Titanic," now would have been the perfect time for director **James Cameron** to jump into his personal pet project, a live-action "Spider-Man" film. And Cameron was willing, saying on the nationally syndicated Howard Stern radio show that "Titanic" star Leonardo DiCaprio would make a great Spider-Man. As Cameron's follow-up project to "Titanic," "Spider-Man" would've received widespread mainstream attention. However, the rights to the project are still in litigation limbo. Alas, Spidey fans everywhere suffer.



TM & © Todd McFarlane Productions

Spawn: Big bucks on video.

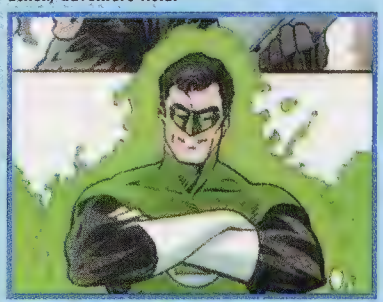
Everett Collection.

DiCaprio: Cameron's Spider-Man.

CHASING GL?: **Kevin Smith**, whose Superman movie script was rejected by director Tim Burton, might get a chance at another DC hero. Smith has talked about a possible **Green Lantern** film. "I lean toward the other green—Green Arrow—but any comic book movie interests me," Smith said.

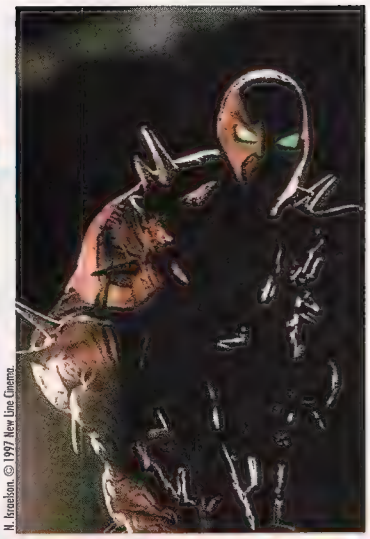
KICK IN THE 'ASH': Sources indicate "Akira" creator/director **Katsuhiro Otomo** is being courted to direct DreamWorks' **"Ash"** animated feature, starring the Event Comics hero. If it happens, we at least hope a "Tetsuoooooooo!" is tossed in for effect.

RENEWED INTEREST: Before the first episode of the **"Silver Surfer"** animated series even aired on Fox on Feb. 7, Saban Entertainment ordered eight more scripts for a second season. And according to sources, it's almost a certainty the syndicated **"NightMan"** television series will be picked up for a second season. The show continues to pull in solid ratings in the crowded action/adventure field.



GL: Kevin Smith's interested.

SPAWN SEQUEL SLATED FOR 2000



N. Israelson. © 1997 New Line Cinema.

Will McFarlane direct the sequel?

Spawn continues to spawn. Terry Fitzgerald of Todd McFarlane Productions said the sequel to New Line Cinema's live-action "Spawn" movie is being targeted for summer 2000.

"We're setting up a meeting in early March," Fitzgerald said. "And we have two different ideas for a sequel that we'll be pitching."

Fitzgerald said it's possible that Spawn creator **Todd McFarlane** will write or co-write the sequel. It's even possible, although probably less likely, according to Fitzgerald, that McFarlane could direct it as well.

In other Spawn news, the animated series on HBO will have several guest voices, including Eric Stoltz ("Pulp Fiction"), Dermot Mulroney ("My Best Friend's Wedding"), Nick Turturro ("NYPD Blue"), Debbi Morgan ("Eve's Bayou") and Robert Forster ("Jackie Brown"). The second season of "Spawn" should start in May or June. W

PBS nixed "Rob Allstetter Yesterday," presenting the harrowing preschool years of the Detroit writer, as a possible 1998 series.

ETC.: "Access Hollywood" reported Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones are both asking for $20 million to do a **"Men in Black"** sequel....Sources said the **"Venom"** movie appears stalled at New Line Cinema....New episodes of **"Sliders"** will begin airing on the Sci-Fi Channel on March 2 at 9 p.m. (ET).....A **"Mortal Kombat"** syndicated television series is targeted to start next fall....This fall, Tate Donovan returns to do the voice of **Hercules** in an animated ABC Saturday morning series that is based on last summer's Disney film.....Three actresses who have appeared in comics genre movies made fashion critic Mr. Blackwell's annual worst-dressed list: **Pamela Lee** of "Barb Wire" at No. 4, **Sigourney Weaver** of "Alien Resurrection" at No. 6 and **Alicia Silverstone** of "Batman & Robin" at No. 8.

Melinda Sue Gordon, Columbia/TriStar

MiB: Show them the money.

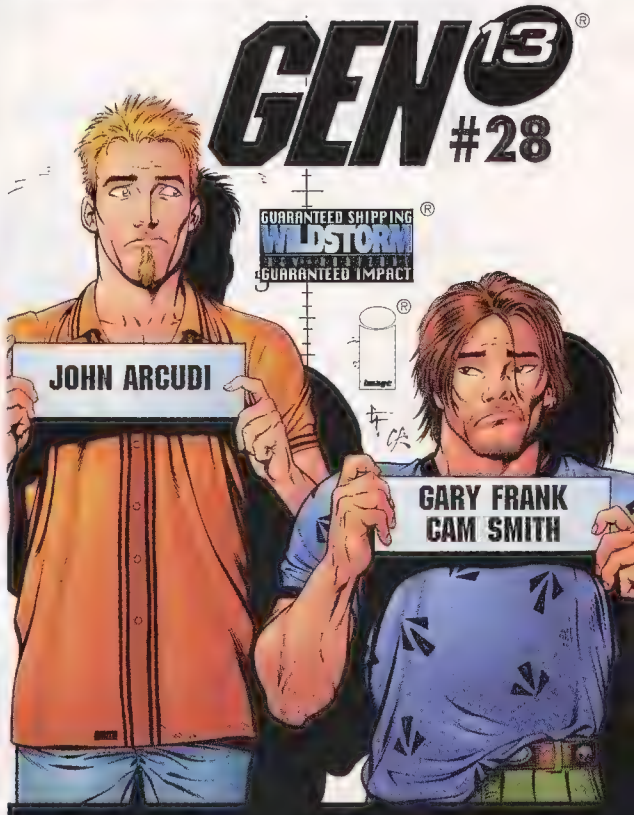
© Polygram Filmed Entertainment

Pam: Better off nude.

SPECIAL REPORT on next page

CH-CH-CH-CHANGES!

What's in store for the team's...er...LINE-UP?



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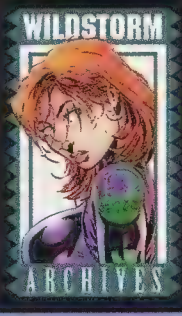
A 528-page, black-and-white collection of Gen13 stories, including:



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SPECIAL REPORT: GOING 'SOUTH'

Comedy Central's 'South Park' slams the competition as TV's raunchiest show

By GREG ORLANDO

A crooning piece of human dung. A mobile gay animal shelter. Jesus Christ slugging it out with Santa Claus for Yuletide supremacy.

Sound raunchy? Not in the cartoon world of "South Park," where if it ain't bordering on the obscene, it ain't happening.

"South Park," for the uninitiated, is the unflinchingly funny hit animated TV show on the Comedy Central cable network that makes "Beavis & Butt-head" look like "Tom & Jerry." The brainchild of creators Matt Stone, 26, and Trey Parker, 28, "Park" relates the tale of four boys (Stan, Cartman, Kyle and Kenny) and their overly violent, flatulence-filled lives in the mountain town of South Park, Colorado.

"It's basically the world seen through the eyes of a third-grader," Stone says about his magnum opus. "And it's a really f---ed-up world, so they have a f---ed-up view of a f---ed-up world."

Vomited into American homes, "South Park" is a cult-hit phenomenon. The show is Comedy Central's most popular offering—ever—and songs from "South Park" (most notably "Kyle's Mom is a Big, Fat Bitch") are played daily on radio stations all over the country. Across the fruited plains, Americans are spouting the show's dialogue and wearing its near-endless supply of officially licensed T-shirts. Like "The Simpsons" and "Beavis & Butt-head" before it, "South Park" mania is upon us.

Photo and all artwork © Comedy Central

With all the subtlety of a kick in the crotch, Stone (left) and Parker's "South Park" is Comedy Central's biggest hit *ever*.

Despite the seemingly tireless attempt to gross out its audience, "South Park" has proved to be a success story from day one. The show was birthed from a short animated film titled "The Spirit of Christmas." Two versions were made of "Christmas," and Stone is quite up-front about the original. "It had Frosty the Snowman in it and it was really sh-tty animation," he says. "It was really bad. We shot in 16mm for like 70 bucks."

From left: Stan, Cartman, Kyle and Kenny learn lessons every episode. In one, the tykes learn Christmas is about one thing: presents.

The Grim Reaper has so far claimed Kenny in every episode but one.

The second "The Spirit of Christmas," shot over the course of three long nights, hit the mother lode. In it, the four boys witness a fight between Jesus and Santa Claus over the true meaning of Christmas. After a great deal of cursing—"Dude, don't say 'pigf---er' in front of Jesus," Stan quips to Cartman—the three kids (*sans* Kenny, who's unceremoniously decapitated) ultimately realize Christmas means one thing: presents.

Parker and Stone made one copy of the tape and gave it to a network executive as a Christmas card. From that one copy, hundreds were passed across the country. Then thousands. Eventually, a copy reached Comedy Central. The rest is history.

"We don't even have a copy of it anymore," Stone laughs.

And from that came a nine-episode first season, beginning last August. To create an episode, Parker and Stone divvy up the show's responsibilities. "The things we do together and the things we do separately, it's kind of a fine line sometimes," Stone says. "Trey is definitely the director, and we do the voices together. We write a lot of things together and we come up, basically, with the ideas together."

Each show begins with a concept, Stone continues, followed by an outline, a script and the recording of dialogue. After the dialogue, a pre-animation slideshow made up of dialogue with storyboards (called an animatic) is made, and then work is doled out to the animators. The finished shots are put into an editing system and the work is pored over meticulously. Then the sound and color work is completed and the episode is shipped off.

When Stan learns his dog Sparky is gay, Big Gay Al comes to the rescue.

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ON TOUR WITH OASIS.

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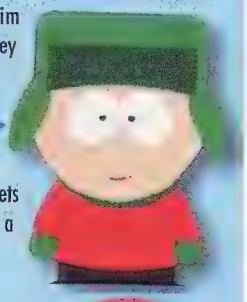
'PARK' LOT

Wanna know who's what in "South Park"? Here's a quick rundown of the town's major inhabitants.

◀ STAN He's your average third-grader, who serves as the *de facto* leader of a gang that includes Kyle, Kenny and Cartman. He's smitten with classmate Wendy Testaburger, who makes him vomit whenever they try to kiss.



KYLE ▶ Each December, third-grader Kyle is forced to take to the streets to defend his Jewishness by singing, "I'm a Jew, a Lonely Jew on Christmas."

KENNY ▶ Doomed to suffer a thousand excruciating deaths, Kenny is a textbook example of poor white trash. He mumbles to mask a mouth more dirty than ex-unfunnyman Andrew "Dice" Clay. Rats love to eat Kenny's decaying flesh.

◀ CARTMAN Fat-assed and spoiled, Cartman is as dumb as the day is long. His award-winning school report is really Thoreau's *Walden* copied word-for-word. Cheesy Poofs are his snack food of choice.

◀ MR. GARRISON/ ▼ MR. HAT You try teaching a snot-nosed band of third-graders and see if you don't take to wearing a hand-puppet named Mr. Hat every waking hour. Garrison is right-wing authority gone amok, and a nut ready to be shelled.

CHEF ▶ Jolly and lovable, the Chef serves up meatloaf in South Park Elementary and sweet loving to the women of South Park proper. He likes to sing songs of raw sexuality at inappropriate moments.

◀ OFFICER BARBRADY More of a puppet than Mr. Hat, police officer Barbrady turns a blind eye to the various disasters plaguing South Park and helps to keep the ruling elite firmly in power. ■ *GO*

"That's about the most simple version [of animation] you can do—and it's still missing a lot," Stone says.

Eschewing cel animation, Stone and Parker and their 14-man animation staff use a, um, sophisticated stop-motion technique to film the show. "'South Park' is done with stop-motion construction paper," Stone says. "So you have a piece of construction paper and you click off a frame and then you move it and then you click off a frame. The only advantage is you don't have to draw a drawing for every frame. You just have one, and then you move it around.

"The style wasn't born out of any conscious effort to have advantages. It was kind of born out of laziness," he says, laughing.

To help quicken the process, Parker and Stone now use computers instead of cameras to capture the images. With a computer, Parker and Stone can manipulate and alter the filmed animation. Right now, the "South Park" staff can animate a show in three weeks. Next season, more people will be added and 20 shows will be shot in 10 months—"which is *lightning* fast," according to Stone.

The show's artwork is done by Parker (Stone can't draw). Stone provides the voice for Kyle and Kenny, while his partner handles Stan and Cartman. And if you're wondering how Kenny's trademark gruff, constipated tones are done: "You just put your hand over your mouth," Stone laughs. "It's pretty sophisticated. We've got high-tech filters working on that."

In a world where only death and taxes are sure bets, expect "South Park" to return in June with a 20-show second season. Stone has plenty of ideas, but says no plots will be finalized until a meeting in late January.

Between February and June, four new episodes will air. "In one, Damian, the son of Satan, comes to South Park, and he and Jesus kind of get in an altercation," says Stone. "And in another we go inside [the nose-job store] Tom's Rhinoplasty for the first time.

"And in the big episode, the last episode, we're going to finally reveal who Cartman's dad is—because everyone's wondering who he is.

"I definitely don't think we're the end-all, be-all of rebellious television, or the only thing that can be viewed on television," Stone admits. "But I think that it really shows that we're not following any of the rules and that we've become so successful because people out there are hungry for something different." W

Wizard Copy Editor Greg Orlando has stood in the fire, been caller number nine and has won the free passes. He is possessed of a lemony-fresh scent.

In one episode, Satan's son (right) hits town gunning for Jesus.

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CHARACTER PROFILE: Kevin Matchstick

BY MATTHEW BRADY

VITAL STATS

Real Name: Kevin Matchstick
Age: 26
Height: 5' 11"
Weight: 185 lbs.
Hair Color: Brown
Eye Color: Blue
First Appearance: *Mage: The Hero Discovered* #1 (1984)
Title Currently Appearing in: *Mage: The Hero Defined*
Major Enemies: The Umbra Sprite, Emil Grackleflint, Pale Incanter and Red Caps

ORIGIN

Kevin Matchstick was a young urban dweller given to cynicism and self-doubt. Not a leader by any means, Kevin had always wished to be a hero, as was evidenced by the comic book-inspired T-shirt he wore. Believing the world and his boring, pointless life to be as good as it gets, Kevin was still nagged by a voice in the back of his mind—almost as if there was something missing in his life.

Kevin got a hint of just what he had been lacking when a magical being called Mirth came into his life. Seemingly a mage of great power, Mirth insisted that Kevin was more than he thought himself to be, and subsequently, Kevin found himself thrust into a strange supernatural adventure, the bulk of which he patently refused to believe in, despite the attacks by incredible creatures he was suddenly encountering.

As Kevin and Mirth traveled across the country, they were joined by two others: Edsel, a young black woman who always carried a baseball bat, and Sean Knight, a former public defender, who was actually a ghost who'd forgotten he'd died. Together, the three found themselves the targets of numerous supernatural attacks and disturbances.

Unable to deny the obvious anymore, Kevin gave in to Mirth and began to listen to him. And the hero's journey began.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

Kevin and his companions quickly found the source of all the disturbances: the Umbra Sprite, a dark being of incredible supernatural power, headquartered in the Styx Hotel and Casino. According to Mirth, the Umbra Sprite was searching for the Fisher King, the mythological creature that possessed immense power. With the Fisher King's blood, the Umbra Sprite would be able to cast the world into an era of darkness which he would rule.

Realizing the threat that Kevin and his crew posed to his plans, the Umbra Sprite dispatched his sons, the Grackleflints, and a horde of other supernatural creatures to kill them.

Tired of just reacting to the Umbra Sprite's plans, Kevin and his companions launched an assault on the Styx. In the resultant battles, Kevin was mortally wounded, and Sean sacrificed himself so that the others could escape. Mirth hastily took Kevin and Edsel into the realm of magic, where Kevin recovered from his injury in a year's time.

Upon their return to this plane, Kevin, Edsel and Mirth quickly came under attack again; this time, the battle proved fatal for Edsel. With her dying breath, she revealed that Kevin is the reincarnation of Arthur Pendragon, the legendary King Arthur. Taking Edsel's bat, which was actually an aspect of the mythological sword Excalibur, Kevin fully accepted his destiny.

Kevin headed to the Styx, where he cleaned house, only to find that the Umbra Sprite had been murdered by his own son, Emil. Without the power of the Umbra Sprite, the Styx collapsed, releasing supernatural energy and beings throughout the world.

Following Kevin's victory at the Styx, he and Mirth traveled the world, cleaning up the supernatural mess that the destruction of the Styx left behind. Only one of Kevin's adventures during this time has been recorded, an encounter with a water demon in a Parisian fountain.

Since that battle, Mirth has once again left Kevin, promising that a second Mage would come to guide him. Kevin has resumed his travels and hunting, and has met with other adventurers claiming to be reincarnations of mythological heroes, including the speedster Joe Phat, a reincarnation of Hiawatha, and Kirby Hero, a reincarnation of Hercules. The three have also been joined by Wally Ut, who claimed to be Kevin's second Mage. Kevin remains unconvinced.

Behind the scenes, the mysterious Pale Incanter plots evil against the trio, sending wave after wave of supernatural threats against them, while slowly building a golem to kill them all.

Convinced that they should head north, the three have recently ended up in Canada, where they have witnessed a great massing of supernatural forces. Wanting to do more than just clean up the mess, Kevin now seeks to take a proactive role in stopping the evil altogether. However, the Pale Incanter has other plans.

UPCOMING HIGHLIGHTS

Dissension grows! "Kirby's sister shows up, and what she has planned for him just might not be what Kevin was planning," *Mage* writer/penciler Matt Wagner says. "Also, Kevin is going to assert himself as the group's leader more and more, all the while explaining that he doesn't want to be the leader of the group."

As if all the other threats they've been facing weren't enough, things will really get ugly in Canada as the Pale Incanter's golem is brought to life and heads out to wipe the boys off the face of the Earth in what promises to be a major, *major* blowout. Also, Kevin will be meeting up with other reincarnated heroes, such as Prester John, a mythological Christian hero.

Look for Wally Ut's mystical ramblings to start to make a little more sense, and Kevin to realize that there just might be more to the old coot than meets the eye after all, as the series starts to draw toward its climax in issue #15.

And after *The Hero Defined*? "The third part of the whole story will be a final mini-series, called *Mage: The Hero Denied*," Wagner says. "Hopefully, there won't be another 10-year hiatus between the series as there was with the first and second *Mage* series."

But what if you missed the original 15-part *Mage: The Hero Discovered*? Don't worry, says Wagner. "It took a while, but we've finally located and acquired all the film for the original series, so we will be reprinting the entire *Hero Discovered* soon."

RECOMMENDED HIGHLIGHTS

Okay, still unsure where to jump in and grab some *Mage*? Then try these prime picks of magic and mayhem, as recommended by Wagner himself.

- ***Mage: The Hero Discovered* #6**—"The explanation of just who and what Sean is, and what the deal is with the Styx Hotel. The art really clicked with the story in that one."
- ***Mage: The Hero Discovered* #9**—"Mirth is gone, and the three have to act on their own. I liked how the story worked out, plus it served as a turning point where the three decided to go up against the Umbra Sprite."
- ***Mage: The Hero Discovered* #15**—"The grand finale! It wraps up the first series and sets up where things will head for the second. Plus, there's a dragon."
- ***Mage: The Hero Defined* #4**—The guys head to Isis' house to get some help, and end up smoking a magical cigarette. Thankfully, before the magic munchies kick in, goblins attack, and Kevin shows just why he's a hero.

North Carolina-based writer Matthew Brady was recently thrust into a supernatural adventure. He spent the whole night on that damn toilet.

TOP 10 HEROES & VILLAINS OF THE MONTH

This list doesn't track the number of copies which a specific character sells each month. It doesn't pay attention to any kind of sales meter. This list is a roster of the 10 comic book characters with the strongest fan following—nothing more, nothing less.

1) SPAWN

Being a nice fella, Al Simmons (Spawny-Guy to you, pal) occasionally drops by on his wife, Wanda. But every time Wanda sees him, she freaks. Spawn can't figure out why. Here's a hint, Al: YOU LOOK LIKE YOU WASH YER FACE WITH 12-MOLAR HYDROCHLORIC ACID! Spawn's face looks like rotting meat, a shoestring holds his mug together and he's only got 12 hairs left on his head. He looks like a Barbie doll that's been left in the microwave on "high" for 10 minutes and he probably has a smell to match. Oh, well. Spawn may be the most popular character going these days...but he ain't too smart.

2) WITCHBLADE

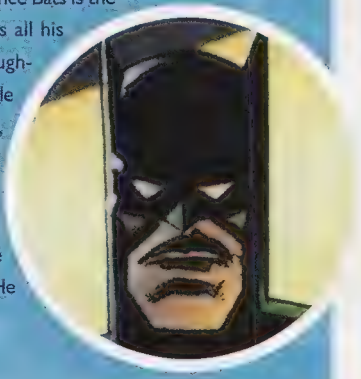
Yee-oow! Looks like Sara Pezzini, Ms. Witchblade herself, is comin' off a *loooong* night. We're willing to bet she has a lot of long nights. After all, not only is she a full-time cop *and* this generation's chosen bearer of the Witchblade, but she's also one quasi-fabulous babe in the Top Cow Universe. We bet anytime she wants, she can rope any bull in the Cow's pasture and knock Witchboots with the lucky guy until dawn. Sure, it's a busy life. And sure, it's probably fun. But if ya wind up lookin' like this in the morning, is it really worth it? Yeah, probably.

3) WOLVERINE

Speaking of looking like death warmed over, chewed up and spit out whole, welcome to the Wolverine portion of our countdown. Wolvie's got a nifty-keen mutant healing factor allowing him to rebound from practically any wound, and it looks like he feels obligated to get as many miles out of it as he can. Wolvie gets his ass kicked but good more consistently than anyone we've ever seen, but he always comes back good-as-new. That's a big part of his appeal. You could say he gets knocked down, but he gets up again. Hey! maybe we can make a song out of that!

4) BATMAN

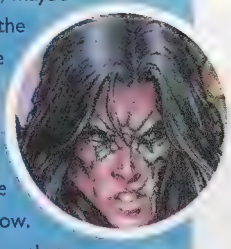
Now we've heard of square jaws before, but this is ridiculous. Just look at Batman's mug here. His chin is a set of perfectly realized 45 degree angles that your geometry teacher would probably have a hard time drawing. He makes Jay Leno look like he has a little girlie chin. But since Bats is the star of four monthly titles all his own *and* takes on the tough-ass "real man" leadership role in DC's hyper-popular *JLA*, the ol' Dark Knight Detective is one of the most popular heroes in all of comicdom. So maybe he ain't runway model-pretty. He gets the job done.



5) DEADPOOL

Gads and forsooks! What goes on here? Deadpool, one of the funniest guys found on a four-color page is wearing...a beret? A stinking French-inspired poofy fashion accessory? Why? Well, maybe it had to do with being part of his clever disguise that he used to infiltrate the X-Mansion so he could check in on his some-time-girlfriend Siryn. See, Deadpool merely donned this offensive headgear so that he could sneak in and get some. Now *that's* clever. And always fashionable.

6) THE DARKNESS



Nice face. Ya look like the Borg. Okay, maybe Jackie Estacado, the current wielder of the Darkness hasn't been assimilated, but he does have a new penciler: Mr. Joe Benitez, whose talents are showcased in this mug shot. Benitez takes over on one of comics' most popular characters with *The Darkness* #13, hitting...oh...right about now. And if Estacado doesn't like Benitez, he can always summon up about 53 of those cute (but evil!) li'l Darkling guys to feast on his entrails. Hey, Joe—no pressure.

7) IRON MAN

Woo-hoo! Iron Man is back where he belongs! He's back in place in the one-and-only Marvel Universe, and best of all, he's no longer the snot-nosed 17-year-old punk who betrayed the Avengers! As if that wasn't enough to have Iron Fans peeing their pants, there's *also* that fact that monthly adventures of Tony Stark are brought to you by new artist Sean Chen, who's doin' an ass-whippin'-cool job of drawin' some of the finest armor you've ever seen.

8) MAGNETO

Woo-hoo! Magneto is back where he belongs! He's back in place as the one-and-only all-time X-Men badass villain, and best of all, we now can have our pie and eat it too! Magneto *and* the ever-enigmatic Joseph (we all *thought* he was Magneto until the revelations of *Uncanny X-Men* #350) now co-exist in the Marvel Universe. How's Magneto gonna celebrate his triumphant return? We're betting on some evil, followed by more evil and then some evil. We can't wait.

9) THE THING

Woo-hoo! The Thing is back where...aw, we're getting repetitive. But make no mistake: Nobody but nobody is more lovable than Aunt Petunia's favorite nephew, the man-inside-the-monster we all root for deep down inside, the cigar-chompin', "Clobberin' Time!"-bellowin', ever-lovin' blue-eyed Thing! And even though he's got a mug that looks like 20 miles of bad road, Ben Grimm has always put the most "human" face on the Fantastic Four. Fans everywhere are jazzed at his return.

10) PREACHER

Secrets of comics...revealed! It can finally be told! Jesse Custer, star of *Preacher*, is actually the love-child of Little Orphan Annie! The blank pupils are a dead give-away! Suddenly, we know why Daddy Warbucks hung around Annie all those years. Too bad Jesse's too busy to write home to mom these days. He's taking on the Saint of Killers out in Monument Valley, Arizona...and continuing his quest to find God and make him go back to Heaven. Hey, it keeps a guy busy.

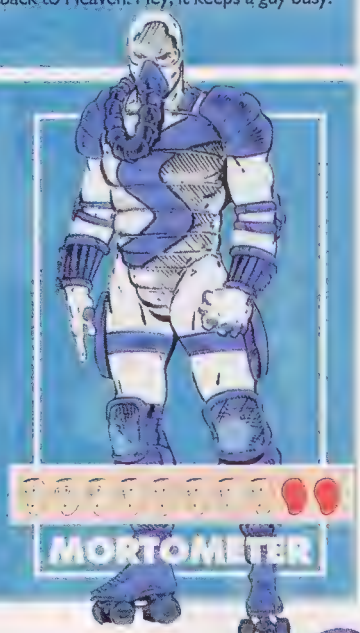
MORT OF THE MONTH

Now it's time to look at the lamest character of the month, or, as we like to call 'em, the Mort of the Month!

BLUE STREAK

Blue Streak, a painful remnant of bizarre 1970s culture when roller-skating was actually cool, was a villain who tried to infiltrate S.H.I.E.L.D., Marvel's elite anti-terrorist organization, with rocket-powered roller skates! Y'see, with these skates, he could...uh...skate really, really fast! And that's about it. Needless to say, he got beat like a drum.

After an incredibly short and very unproductive criminal career, Blue Streak was fortunately turned into a red streak when Scourge, a villain who killed other villains, blew his brains out in a show of good taste. Good riddance.



EIDOS Interactive Presents:

The "Tomb Raider II Mania" Contest

contest

Lara Croft is back in *Tomb Raider II*, the sequel to the more-popular-than-Elvis action-adventure video game. Lara fights underwater enemies in new exotic locations, swings from chandeliers, climbs walls and explores a ton of new 3-D worlds. Wanna get your hands on her? Bet you do!

This contest is sponsored by EIDOS Interactive, the lucky ones that get Lara all day, every day.

PlayStation

EIDOS INTERACTIVE

Legal HooHa

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Entertainment, EIDOS Interactive, their immediate families, and anyone that still uses a Commodore 64. Anyone remember *Raid Over Moscow*? That game kicked butt in, like, 1986. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach the form or card to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: *Tomb Raider II* Mania Contest, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Entertainment and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by April 30, 1998.** Say, in *Tomb Raider II* you can squish people with a machine-gun-manned snowmobile! Who says old-fashioned mutilation ain't fun? Wizard Entertainment is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Winners will be selected by random drawing from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Entertainment. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Winners will be notified no later than June 4, 1998. If an entrant, having been declared as a winner, does not accept the prize or the prize or prize notification is undeliverable, another entry will be selected. In the event that a prize is not available or it becomes impossible for the sponsor to award the prize which has been designated, the sponsor retains the right to substitute a prize or product of equal value to the winner. Determination of whether a prize or product is of equal value is in the sole discretion of the sponsor. Winning entries will be selected on or about May 14, 1998.

For a list of winners, available after May 14, 1998, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: *Tomb Raider II* Mania Winners List, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

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PRIZES!

Grand Prize (1):

One lucky Lara Croft lover takes home a copy of *Tomb Raider II*, a PlayStation system to play it on and the *Tomb Raider/Witchblade* comic book signed by writer/artist Mike Turner!

First Prize (5):

Five adventurers each win a copy of *Tomb Raider II* for the Playstation and the *Tomb Raider/Witchblade* comic book signed by Mike Turner.

Second Prize (10):

Ten winners each get a *Tomb Raider* T-shirt and a *Tomb Raider* poster!

Well, we're gonna make it easy for you. Just fill out the entry form below completely and send it in. That's it! If you're one of the lucky few whose names get picked, you'll walk away with lots of Lara. Get clipping!

Fill this out and put it in an envelope. Send to: Tomb Raider II Mania Contest, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. Deadline is April 30, 1998

"*Tomb Raider II* Mania" Contest Entry Form

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MANGA SCENE

By Carl Gustav Horn

A GUIDE TO JAPANESE COMICS AND ANIMATION BOTH PAST AND PRESENT

PLAY BALL!

Manga monster 'Dragon Ball' preps for a March U.S. invasion

Collecting Dragon Balls is a dirty business, but Goku, the hero of *Dragon Ball*, is up to the challenge.

In the Kingdom of the Funnybook, it might be hard to dispute *Dragon Ball*'s claim to the throne.

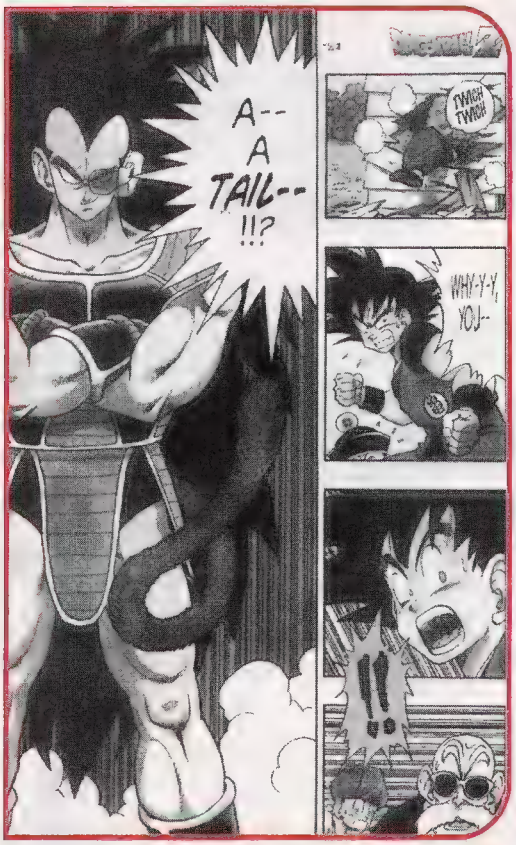
Over 135 million copies of Akira Toriyama's *Dragon Ball* have been sold in Japan. Like some comic book Godzilla, the series crushed all in its wake, spawning a endless series of anime, action figures, toys and video games. When the animated "Dragon Ball Z" came to America, it quickly became the nation's most popular cartoon show. *Dragon Ball* may well be just as well-loved in Europe as it is in Japan, making it more than probable that *Dragon Ball* is the most popular comic book in the entire world.

Now, the comic is coming to America in two very different flavors: *Dragon Ball* and *Dragon Ball Z*. Both titles, debuting in March, are separate parts of the same Japanese comic and tell the epic story of Goku, a superpowered, monkey-tailed boy. The two concurrent *Dragon Ball* story arcs, housed in their separate monthly titles, enable the reader to see hero Goku at the two most important stages in his life—*without* having to wait years to do so, as the original Japanese audiences did.

Dragon Ball revolves around young Goku's encounter with a girl named Bulma and their subsequent quest to find the seven mystical "Dragon Balls." These artifacts, when recovered and combined, can summon a great dragon to grant a wish. *Dragon Ball Z* flashes the story ahead to a grown-up Goku, whose youthful fun has been put aside for a campaign of endless martial-arts battles against magical monsters and conquering aliens.

"Toriyama's genius, and therefore his success, lies in his ability to combine a sense of fantasy adventure and humor with characters [who are] each distinctly their own person," says Viz Editor-in-Chief Satoru Fujii. In fact, every single thing, be it person, hill or dune buggy, in a Toriyama manga, *is* a character. Whereas many "realistic" manga stories today place their inhabitants in layouts filled with traced photographs of cities and cars, Toriyama approaches comic books by never forgetting he has the right to be a cartoonist and portray anything any way he sees fit. In *Dragon Ball*, which ran in Japan from 1985 to 1995, the result is continually quirky and unique; with Toriyama, American manga fans are getting a kind of wild freedom in drawing (with the skill to exploit it to its fullest) not seen here before.

Beyond its sterling art, *Dragon Ball* strikes a chord in a very familiar arena. Viz Associate Editor James Teal certainly thinks it's valid to view Goku as a superhero, and solid parallels can be drawn between Goku and American icon Superman. Both are aliens, were sent to Earth as small children



As an adult, Goku quests to become the ultimate martial-arts fighter in *Dragon Ball Z*.

to escape the destruction of their homeworlds and possess similar superpowers (flight and super-strength).

But Goku's a refreshing kind of superhero. In one sense, his pure-hearted nature and optimistic strength of character puts him in tune with the recent creative backlash in American comics against dark, obsession-driven vigilantes. On the other hand, though, Goku goes against the mold of traditional U.S. superheroes in that his interest doesn't lie in protecting society *per se*, but only in overcoming the challenge of each antagonist he meets, so that he can move onto the next challenge. And the moral code he expresses to his enemies is that they should do the same. His defeated foes often join up with him in spirit, and when Goku shows mercy, it's with the condition that his enemy trains harder so they can fight once again!

This philosophy makes *Dragon Ball* a fascinating departure from American comics and their ideas about superheroes: that there must be conflict between the powers and the person who has them, and superpowers are either of no real help to heroes unhappy in their personal lives, or superpowers will actually make a hero's personal life worse. The notion in *Dragon Ball* that superpowers are a tool for personal growth seems almost radical; divorced from a mission to help society, *Dragon Ball*'s heroes can use their powers to help themselves. It's a thought-provoking application of traditional martial-arts ethics on the superhuman scale.

It's not likely these comics will sink like a stone in America's waters. With a beautifully rendered world, an interesting hero and a unique perspective on the nature of heroism and a hero's abilities, *Dragon Ball* might go as far in America as it has in the rest of the world.

And then some.

Cyberpunk and fashion victim Carl Horn exists in the state of Euphoria. Or California.

F.Y.I.

Why are there two names for the manga series? In Japan, the entire 42-volume story was known under the name *Dragon Ball*. However, the two parts of the anime show based on the manga distinguished themselves by adding a "Z" to the second part. Viz Comics has decided to use the two different TV names to better distinguish each manga title. The Viz English-language version will be published in the right-to-left format of the original art, as is standard for Japanese comics. Both *Dragon Ball* and *Dragon Ball Z* will be published monthly at a price of $2.95, with 32 black-and-white pages each.

ANIME PICK OF THE MONTH

KEY THE METAL IDOL

(Viz Video, 52 mins. each, $24.95/$29.95 subtitled/dubbed)

You might not laugh so hard at the Spice Girls if you lived in Japan, where image-driven "idol singers" are an industry, one given a very strange twist in "Key the Metal Idol," a mysterious, compelling 13-part series. Creator Hiroaki Sato gives us this story—compared by some to the mood of "Twin Peaks" director David Lynch's work—of Key, an unblinking young girl from a small town in Japan who is trapped in the belief that she is a robot, and driven by the faith given her by a dying grandfather that she can become a human being by finding 30,000 friends. Trying to fulfill the prophecy by becoming an idol singer (when she can't even smile), Key finds friends in the big city who accept her for what she is, but what *is* she? And what are her secrets that fascinate groupies, idols, executives and cult leaders alike? The excellence of Sato's directing is clearly evident with the energy and life shown in every scene. Look for great things in the future from Hiroaki Sato, and look out for part six of "Key" to be out in April.

MANGA PICKS OF THE MONTH

Must-read manga books shipping in March

CATHEDRAL CHILD

Image Comics

Image is known for manga-influenced series such as *Gen13*, but never before has it published something like *Cathedral Child*, a 112-page graphic novel written and drawn by Lea Hernandez. An alternate-history "steampunk romance" set in 1897 Texas, *Cathedral* stars a heroine named Glory, a handmaid in a half-finished cathedral, whose best friend is a computer program named Camille. "Cathedral" is also the name of the computer that created Camille, and when Glory wishes for Camille to be "free" of the machine, a strange adventure ensues.

LEGEND OF LEMNEAR #3

CPM Comics

The quest of Lemnear and Lian hits a stone wall—literally—as the pair find themselves held captive, locked in the slave pits of the vile trafficker in flesh, Vuan. But when Lemnear is sprung not by a friend, but a bitter enemy, Larga, both Vuan and Lian can only look on in amazement as Lemnear and Larga engage in fierce combat. Can they stay out of the fight? Should they? And what shocking truth will be revealed about Lian's past relationship to the very slave trader who now holds her captive?

DOCTOR! #5

Studio Ironcat

"Payback in the City of Santa La Paz" continues the journey of the strange Doctor and his stranger assistant Liquido Medio through the Andes Mountains. The eyes of a stranger remind the Doctor of Tierra, the woman who once saved his life. When Tierra's brother Verde tells him the sad tale of why the Doctor can never pay Tierra back, the Doc swears to transfer his vow to the one before him in the greatest need: the young girl under Verde's care.

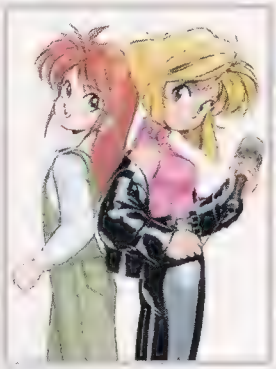
MIXX ZINE #5

Mixx Publications

The bimonthly manga anthology magazine features a host of fast-paced, in-your-face tales. In "Parasyte," Mr. A goes on a rampage and has a showdown with Shin, while in "Magic Knights Rayearth," the Knights battle Ferrio within the Forest of Silence. "Sailor Moon" continues as we meet the ponytailed Sailor Jupiter, and "Ice Blade" turns even darker as we learn the secrets of both Kai and Kunashi Island during their retro-war with the Soviets!

GUNSMITH CATS: GOLDIE VS. MISTY #5 (of 7)

Dark Horse Comics



The love that bounty hunter Minnie May has for mad bomber Ken Taki is served on the rocks. Y'see, May's been introduced to a fabulously stinking-rich business executive who's looking for a wife that he can show off like a trophy. May's doubts are compounded when she gets a flat tire and has some time to think—will her respite bring her a brush with death or enlightenment? *Cats* is for mature readers only.

X/1999: INTERMEZZO

Viz Comics

At the end of the millennium, the most powerful psychic on Earth is the teenage Kamui, and whispers of his fate come from both sides: first from the child-like dreamseer Hinoto, leader of the "Seven Seals" who guard the world, and then from Hinoto's seductive sister Kanoe, leader of the rival "Seven Harbringers." Is Kamui's destiny preordained, or does he have the freedom to choose his path? The four-woman team behind *X/1999*, known as "Clamp," once again turns out some of the most elegant and dynamic layouts to be found in comics anywhere.

By Joyce M. Steel

MARCH'S ARTISTIC MADNESS

Comic Images and Dynamic Forces are teaming up to bring you more comic talent than you can handle in a month, all in one fierce set. *Comic Greats '98* is a 72-card set sporting existing and original art from comic geniuses Frank Miller, Marc Silvestri, Joe Quesada, Jimmy Palmiotti, Geof Darrow, the brothers Hildebrandt and more. Fan-favorite books like *The Darkness*, *Leave it to Chance*, *Cyberforce* and *Ash* are among the set's featured titles. Chasing the series are six OmniChrome Cards (one per every 16 boxes or 1:16) and 500 randomly assorted Autographed cards (eight cards per pack, suggested retail price $1.49).

XENA MODELS

Xena lovers line-up for Topps' first-ever card set to feature the popular warrior princess. After selling more than 130,000 copies of their *Xena #1* comic and 100,000 copies of their *Xena* magazine, Topps decided it was high time to let card collectors in on the Xena action. The 72-carder features episode cards highlighting Xena's first blockbuster season, along with subsets of allies and rivals, and a slew of behind-the scenes cards showcasing star Lucy Lawless and company on location in New Zealand. Chasing the series are six Mirror cards of Xena in action (1:12) and two Finest Chromium cards (1:36) (eight cards per pack, suggested retail $1.99).

LOST IN SPACE

Inkworks follows up on last fall's *Classic Lost in Space* offering with a set based on the upcoming New Line Cinema "Lost in Space" flick. With more than 700 computer-generated special effects in the movie, the new 90-card series will boast some of the year's coolest still images. The set promises the "Space Family Robinson" story recap, along with character profiles including those played by William Hurt, Gary Oldman, Mimi Rogers and Matt LeBlanc. Chasing the series are a Double Feature eight-card foil set, each of which shows both the classic character and their modern movie counterpart (1:11); four Spectra Etched foil cards featuring "The War of the Robots" (1:24); and a Foil Embossed "Revenge of Dr. Smith" card (1:108) (eight cards per pack, suggested retail $1.79).

SHI SHINES

Last month's *Shi Mega Chromium* set from Krome Productions is set for a HoloChrome makeover. Fans'll find the same original art from artists Billy Tucci, Val Mayerik and the Crusade Comics gang in the oversized 30-carder, only this time it's on super-glitzy HoloChrome stock. Sold in full sets, you'll hafta pawn somethin' pretty hefty to afford it (30 cards per boxed set, suggested retail $59.95).

BEEEEAAAAN!!!

Bean terrorizes Dart FlipCards this month. Mr. Bean, fresh from Tinseltown and his new "Bean" movie, comes to cards in a 72-carder of collected images from the funny flick and the classic television show that inspired it. Six randomly inserted lenticular motion cards chase the series (six cards per pack, suggested retail $1.99).

GILLIGAN AND GINGER

For fans of the S.S. Minnow, Dart FlipCards introduces a brand-spankin' new *Gilligan's Island* set, complete with images of all seven castaways...including Ginger (Tina Louise) and MaryAnn (Dawn Wells), both of whom have rarely appeared in prior "Gilligan's Island" memorabilia. The series is chased by six randomly inserted Lenticular motion character cards. A bounceback offer for a special six-card prism sheet is included on each pack (six cards per pack, suggested retail $1.99).

CCG EXPANSIONS

A bit of news for collectible card game (CCG) buffs: HarperPrism, the company that recently released *Aliens vs. Predator* and Clive Barker's *Imajica*, will be putting out expansion sets for both of those games in the coming months. The *Aliens vs. Predator* expansion will focus on material from the "Aliens Resurrection" flick, while Barker's hard at work penning new stuff for the *Imajica* expansion. W

The phenomenon that is Joyce Steel is naturally occurring...but only in the grape-growing regions of France.

"Ow! Owwww! Okay, okay, I'll do this 'thespian' thing with you, just lemme up!"
Xena, Warrior Princess

"Major West, with my enhanced robotic receptors, I can tell your career is almost over."
Lost in Space

"My goodness...I think I just sat on Danger Mouse!"
Mr. Bean

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***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. Here are the back issues burning up the charts in February.**

TOP 10 COMICS

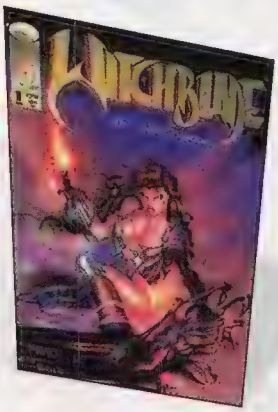
1. JLA #1

WRITER: Grant Morrison
ARTISTS: Howard Porter and John Dell

Let's see what's happening in the world today: *El Niño* continues to wreak havoc with the world's weather systems, 1.3 million chickens are dead in Hong Kong, the Spice Girls remain as vacuous as ever and *JLA* #1 is in the leadoff slot in "Top 10 Comics." Yep. Looks like everything checks out as normal.

Even though *JLA* #1 is now part of an inexpensive collected edition and even though original copies are going for, like, a kajillion bucks, collectors are still chasing after copies like it was free pie or something. Unless, of course, those collectors are in Hong Kong, in which case they're chasing after it like it was untainted chicken or something. **LAST MONTH: 1**

2. WITCHBLADE #1



WRITERS: David Wohl, Brian Haberlin and Christina Z.
ARTISTS: Michael Turner and D-Tron

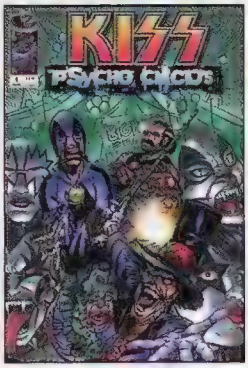
Speaking of chicken, poultry is an important part of a low-fat diet that can keep one fit, trim and full of energy. We're willing to bet that Sara Pezzini, little Miss Witchblade herself, downs a lotta chicken. After all, she's lookin' pretty fit 'n' trim these days, and she's got energy to burn. Check out this staying power: *Witchblade* #1 has been on this list a whoppin' 21 months in a row! And last we checked, there were 21 issues of *Witchblade* out. So this book has been a top seller for the entire life of the series. With a record like that, Witchblade's more impressive than the Energizer Bunny. She keeps going and going and going.... **LAST MONTH: 2**

3. JLA #2

WRITER: Grant Morrison
ARTISTS: Howard Porter and John Dell

Hey! What's that smell? Smells like...last month's list? Guess it does. All three of this month's top books appear in the *exact same order* they did last month—testament to the incredible popularity of both *Witchblade* and *JLA*. So what would happen if Witchblade were to *join* the JLA? Well for starters, we'd have to invent a new number for this list even higher than "1." And we'd also guess that the Flash, that self-styled ladies man, would try to put the moves on Witchy and she'd have to kick his ass. **LAST MONTH: 3**

NUMBER THREE



NUMBER FOUR

4. KISS: THE PSYCHO CIRCUS #1

WRITER: Brian Holguin
ARTISTS: Angel Medina and Kevin Conrad

The KISS Army is everywhere! Everywhere, we tell you! They could be your neighbors! They could live RIGHT NEXT DOOR to you! They might even *be* you! They are legion, and they are buying *KISS: The Psycho Circus* in monster-ass quantity! It's a pretty simple equation: Top-selling comics these days sell 200,000 copies at best. But there are literally millions of KISS fans coast-to-coast. Suddenly, you've got a lot of non-comic people chasing, of all things, a comic. Hence, huge demand. Hence, No. 4. **LAST MONTH: 7**

NUMBER FIVE

5. DARKNESS #11 (CHROMIUM COVER)

WRITERS: Garth Ennis and Malachy Coney
ARTISTS: Marc Silvestri, Joe Benitez, Clarence Lansang and Livesay

In "The Silence of the Lambs," gourmet cannibal Hannibal Lector told us we covet that which we see every day, but do not possess. The Chromium *Darkness* #11 is, therefore, an object to covet. Comic stores had to order a whopping copies of 100 (!) *Darkness* #11 to get one Chromium version. Most stores sold out instantly, so most collectors are stuck seeing their friend's copy every day, but not possessing one. Lector also told us that human liver is best served with fava beans and a nice Chianti, but that's another matter entirely. **LAST MONTH: NOT RATED (N.R.)**

6. UNCANNY X-MEN #350

WRITER: Steven T. Seagle
ARTISTS: Joe Madureira, Andy Smith, Tim Townsend, Vince Russell and Dan Panosian

This sucker is big for two reasons: The debut of Steven T. Seagle as new *Uncanny* writer and the hyped-to-the-heavens "Trial of Gambit" story found here. But here's what we *really* wanna know: The trial revealed that Gambit once worked for major X-baddie Mr. Sinister and Sinister paid Gambit by giving him a tiny little metal canister. Now what's in that canister? Hmmm? Sounds like our next big X-mystery and it sounds like 'till that's revealed, this will probably remain a big back-issue mover. **LAST MONTH: 5**

NUMBER SIX

NUMBER SEVEN

7. X-MEN #70

WRITER: Joe Kelly
ARTISTS: Carlos Pacheco and Art Thibert

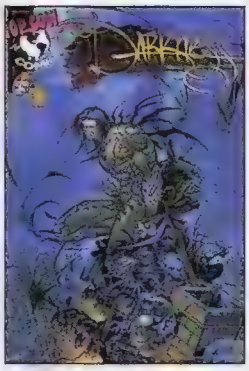
Y'know what? This here *X-Men* #70 just happens to be the first X-issue written by our ol' pal Joe Kelly, and thus provides a nice jumping-on point for new X-readers. And as near as we can tell, new readers are indeed jumping on. There's been a renewed interest in the X-titles since Mr. Seagle and Mr. Kelly started penning new stories and even though there are a buttload of *X-Men* #70s in circulation, this puppy is still showing big back-issue movement. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

8. HEROES REBORN: THE RETURN #1

WRITER: Peter David
ARTISTS: Salvador Larroca and Art Thibert

The Hulk! The Mighty Thor! Spider-Man! Captain America! Dr. Doom! Oneg the Prober! What do all these Marvel stalwarts have in common? Besides the fact that any *one* of 'em could beat the snot out of the entire nation of France with one arm tied behind his back? The fact that they're all in *The Return* #1. Combine that with the fact that this issue helped return Marvel's core heroes back to the one-and-only Marvel Universe and you'll see why this book is so durned popular. **LAST MONTH: 4**

NUMBER EIGHT



NUMBER NINE

9. THE DARKNESS #1

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTISTS: Marc Silvestri and Batt

Check *this* for a birthday present: Jackie Estacado turns 21 and what does he get? New car? Nope. A trip with a leggy supermodel to scenic Cancun, Mexico? Nah, even better. He gets something called "The Darkness," your basic all-purpose superpower where he can do pretty much anything he wants! But then he finds out that if he ever has sex and impregnates a woman, he passes on the power to his heir…and dies. Kinda makes him wish they saved the receipt on the damn thing. **LAST MONTH: 6**

10. MAGE (VOL. 1) #1

WRITER: Matt Wagner
ARTIST: Matt Wagner

Y'know what Kevin Matchstick, the hero of *Mage*, has that very few big-time comic good guys have? A receding hair line. Yup. He's goin' bald. And we appreciate that. It's truth in advertising. Hey, guys go bald. It's a fact. So why can't we have a balding hero? It's not so much the follicle challenges that place this comic on our list, though. It's more the fact that there's a new *Mage* series that's generating acclaim that leads to sparked interest in this 1984 gem. Read it before *your* hair falls out. **LAST MONTH: 9**

NUMBER TEN

THE NEXT TEN

THE NEXT 10 HOT BOOKS AND THE COMPANIES THAT MAKE THEM

11. CURSE OF THE SPAWN #1 McFARLANE /IMAGE
12. DIVINE RIGHT #1 WILDSTORM/IMAGE
13. WITCHBLADE #2 TOP COW/IMAGE
14. SPAWN #1 McFARLANE /IMAGE
15. THUNDERBOLTS #1 MARVEL
16. DARKCHYLDE #1 MAXIMUM
17. ALPHA FLIGHT #1 MARVEL
18. AVENGERS (VOL. 3) #1 MARVEL
19. ASCENSION #1 TOP COW/IMAGE
20. THE COVEN #1 AWESOME

COMIC MARKET NEWS AND SUCH • By Lars Pearson

CLOUDY FUTURE FOR 'DARKNESS' #11

It was the single highest-ordered comic book of 1997 and among the most talked-about. But actual response to *The Darkness* #11 after its release? Depends on how you look at it.

Even before the 11 *Darkness* #11 variant covers (one common cover, nine "rare" covers and one ultra-rare Chromium version) hit in December, anticipation was huge. Many fans expected a repeat of *Gen13* (vol. 2) #1, the 13-covered book of 1995 that went for mammoth back-issue bucks and is still in demand.

But *Gen13* #1 and *Darkness* #11 are dramatically different. Retailers double-checked their customer base this time around and ordered accordingly, meaning decent supply on *Darkness* #11. The "rare" books will almost inevitably show a slight price climb, although demand today is looking somewhat flat and is hampered by cash-strapped fans who've greeted this load of 11 variants with indifference.

The one back-issue bright spot is the Chromium version, one given free to retailers for every 100 copies ordered. That shiny-boy was selling from a low of $35 to a high of $75 right off the bat, with retailers deciding its rarity called for a high price tag. Even at such high levels, the few *Darkness* #11 Chromiums in circulation were flying outta retailers' doors.

The good news for Top Cow is that *Darkness* #11 made the company a slew of money, even figuring in costs for additional cover artists. The bad news is that such a weighted marketing plan usually just holds readership steady in the long term, and ill will may cause those readers to defect in the short term. Orders for *The Darkness* #12 went back to the same approximate level of #10, so it's tough to tell yet what the eventual effect will be. Keep watching—and good luck getting the variants, if yer lookin'.

***Darkness* #11's "rare" Whilce Portacio cover (left) may increase in price, but the "common" cover (right) looks dead.**

YOU GO, GIRL!

Action Girl, a Slave Labor Graphics quarterly anthology series that mainstream readers have ignored like belly-button lint, is now being cited by retailers as a mover and a shaker.

That's a shock, even if the book has writers like Sarah Dyer ("Superman Adventures," "Space Ghost Coast-to-Coast" animated series) and Jill Thompson (*Sandman*). *Action Girl* is gaining ground as a thoughtful anti-bad girl book, geared for and created by females, but also male-reader friendly.

Some think the book won't bump up in value since issues are always kept in print and most readers don't give a rip which printing they own. In fact, there's almost a level of pride among fans that this book has defied collectibility.

For the time being, at least. On popular books with multiple printings, *someone* out there always wants the early prints. First prints of *Action Girl* #1 are curiously undervalued, since most retailers don't even have one in stock. But many admit they'd try to milk $10 or $15 out of a copy if they could get one. Yikes! That's a *huge* boost from a $2.50 cover price, meaning you can probably net a lot more for those first prints than you thought.

'IMMORTAL' FINDS LIFE

The newest contender for the attentions (and wallets) of U.S.-based collectors of Japanese manga? Dark Horse's *Blade of the Immortal*.

With its rapid-fire story of an immortal who has to kill 1,000 evil men before he can die, *BOTI* has found its niche among the "Highlander" movie zealots. Retailers are repeatedly making reference to this book, since its readers are ruthlessly loyal. As Dark Horse's previous sleeper hit *Body Bags* once proved, you only need to mobilize a small group of followers at a key moment to show price jumps.

By the way, the book's print runs are puny, so if this book does clear the mainstream popularity hurdle, collectors left out in the cold could be hurting—much like the Immortal's enemies—in a serious way.

***BOTI* cuts its own path.**

'ALIENS' COMICS HATCH

Just a quick note that the release of the "Alien: Resurrection" movie has hatched some interest in *Aliens* comics. Things aren't quite chest-popping like the Aliens themselves, but the books aren't going for the peanuts they once were either. Most old Dark Horse Aliens titles—and there are a blizzard of mini-series and one-shots to choose from—are now selling strongly at cover price, or just a bit more. Once again, quick and renewed interest has lead to a sudden (although small) price spike.

So what have we learned today? As with many "real world" markets like stocks and commodities, predicting comic prices is often a matter of just cracking open a newspaper. And being able to read too, we suppose. W

Shockingly naïve Wizard *Price Guide Manager Lars Pearson learned today that you should never pee on an electric fence.*

Long forgotten, Aliens are now poppin'!

Wizard's Top 10 Writers

1. **Kurt Busiek** — *Astro City, Avengers* (Paul Schiraldi)
2. **Grant Morrison** — *JLA, The Flash* (Bobo Martin)
3. **Joe Kelly** — *Deadpool, X-Men*
4. **Mark Waid** — *JLA: Year One, Captain America* (Paul Schiraldi)
5. **Peter David** — *Hulk, Aquaman* (Paul Schiraldi)
6. **Garth Ennis** — *Preacher*
7. **Steven T. Seagle** — *Uncanny X-Men, Alpha Flight*
8. **Scott Lobdell** — *Fantastic Four* (J. Schuyler)
9. **Christina Z.** — *Witchblade*
10. **Warren Ellis** — *StormWatch, Transmetropolitan* (Scott Hybakken)

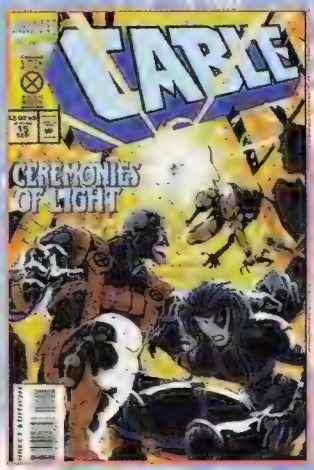
Wizard's Top 10 Artists*

1. **Michael Turner** — *Witchblade*
2. **Marc Silvestri** — *The Darkness* (Jim McHugh)
3. **Jim Lee** — *Divine Right* (Paul Schiraldi)
4. **Alex Ross** — upcoming: *Superman: Peace* (Paul Schiraldi)
5. **Joe Madureira** — upcoming: *Battle Chasers* (Paul Schiraldi)
6. **Adam Kubert** — *Incredible Hulk* (Paul Schiraldi)
7. **Andy Kubert** — *Ka-Zar* (C. Blankenhorn)
8. **Carlos Pacheco** — *X-Men* (Al Ortega)
9. **Leinil Francis Yu** — *Wolverine*
10. **J. Scott Campbell** — *Danger Girl*

***Pencilers and painters**

***Wizard*'s Top 10 Professionals lists are derived from a nationwide retailer survey.**

BURIED TREASURE



CABLE #15

Rogue. Gambit. Bishop. For every X-Man, there's a first appearance. But only hardcore Marvelites realize that Marrow, the X-Men's newest spiky she-devil, had her first appearance in *Cable* #15.

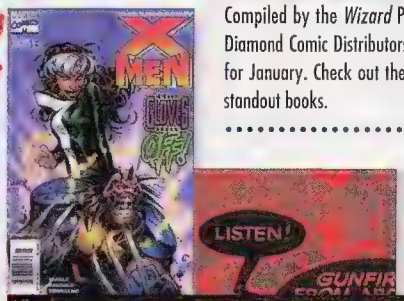
Marrow appears here as a big-eyed, lovable Morlock baby named Sarah. But in true comic book fashion, she later got time-warped, aged and turned into the bloodthirsty vehicle of destruction and death we all love to hate.

Marrow's first appearance as an adult is in *X-Men Prime* #1, but as Cable once proved (see *Uncanny X-Men* #201), first appearances as children can actually see price boosts. And since Marrow is now getting major play in the X-books, *Cable* #15 is a safe—and cheap—bet. ■ *LP*

WIZARD TOP 100

The highest-ordered comic books for the month of JANUARY.

Compiled by the *Wizard* Price Guide staff, and working off the data supplied by Diamond Comic Distributors, the following is a listing of the highest-ordered comics for January. Check out the column on the right for an explanation of this month's standout books.



1. Uncanny X-Men #353 (Marvel)
2. X-Men #73 (Marvel)
3. Avengers #2 (Marvel)
4. Spawn #70 (Todd McFarlane/Image)
5. Iron Man #2 (Marvel)
6. Fantastic Four #3 (Marvel)
7. Wolverine #122 (Marvel)
8. JLA #16 (DC)
9. Captain America #3 (Marvel)
10. Witchblade #20 (Top Cow/Image)
11. The Darkness #12 (Top Cow/Image)
12. Curse of the Spawn #17 (McFarlane/Image)
13. Generation X #36 (Marvel)
14. JLA: Year One #3 (DC)
15. X-Force #75 (Marvel)
16. X-Men Unlimited #18 (Marvel)
17. X-Man #36 (Marvel)
18. JLA: Paradise Lost #3 (DC)
19. X-Factor #143 (Marvel)
20. Cable #52 (Marvel)
21. Amazing Spider-Man #432 (Marvel)
22. Incredible Hulk #462 (Marvel)
23. Ascension #4 (Top Cow/Image)
24. Peter Parker: Spider-Man #89 (Marvel)
25. Spectacular Spider-Man #255 (Marvel)
26. Sensational Spider-Man #25 (Marvel)
27. Excalibur #118 (Marvel)
28. Superman #133 (DC)
29. Action Comics #742 (DC)
30. Lady Death #1 (Chaos!)
31. Superman: The Man of Steel #77 (DC)
32. The Creech #3 (Image)
33. Batman #552 (DC)
34. Thunderbolts #12 (Marvel)
35. Alpha Flight #8 (Marvel)
36. Superman: The Man of Tomorrow #10 (DC)
37. Green Lantern #96 (DC)
38. Deadpool #14 (Marvel)
39. Scarlet Crush #1 (Awesome)
40. The Flash #135 (DC)
41. Astro City #1/2 (Homage/Image)
42. Detective Comics #719 (DC)
43. Unlimited Access #4 (Marvel)
44. Preacher #35 (Vertigo/DC)
45. Batman: Bane of the Demon #1 (DC)
46. Bishop: Xavier's Security Enforcer #3 (Marvel)
47. Nightwing #18 (DC)
48. The Tenth #5 (Image)
49. Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #104 (DC)
50. Green Lantern & Sentinel: Heart of Darkness #1 (DC)
51. WildCORE #3 (WildStorm/Image)
52. Preacher Special: One Man's War (Vertigo/DC)
53. Supergirl #19 (DC)
54. Star Wars: Crimson Empire #2 (Dark Horse)
55. Wonder Woman #131 (DC)
56. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #72 (DC)
57. Legends of the DC Universe #2 (DC)
58. Xena: Warrior Princess #3 (Topps)
59. Voodoo #3 (WildStorm/Image)
60. The X-Files #38 (Topps)
61. Catwoman #55 (DC)
62. Gen^{13} Bootleg #15 (WildStorm/Image)
63. Darkchylde Swimsuit Illustrated #1 (Homage/Image)
64. Robin #51 (DC)
65. Xena: Xena and The Dragon's Teeth #2 (Topps)
66. Ka-Zar #11 (Marvel)
67. Babylon 5: In Valen's Name #1 (DC)
68. What If? #106 (Marvel)
69. Green Arrow #130 (DC)
70. Starman #40 (DC)
71. Maverick #7 (Marvel)
72. WildC.A.T.s #45 (WildStorm/Image)
73. Heroes for Hire #9 (Marvel)
74. Coven #5 (Awesome)
75. Neil Gaiman & C. Vess' Stardust #4 (Vertigo/DC)
76. Mage: The Hero Defined #7 (Image)
77. Wonder Woman Secret Files #1 (DC)
78. Elektra #16 (Marvel)
79. Teen Titans #18 (DC)
80. Arcanum #8 (Top Cow/Image)
81. S. Wars: X-Wing R.S.—Family Ties #1 (D.H.)
82. DV8 #15 (WildStorm/Image)
83. Silver Surfer #137 (Marvel)
84. Werewolf by Night #2 (Marvel)
85. X-Men: The Manga #1 (Marvel)
86. Aquaman #42 (DC)
87. Azrael #39 (DC)
88. Quicksilver #5 (Marvel)
89. Daredevil #373 (Marvel)
90. The X-Files: Ground Zero #3 (Topps)
91. Chase #2 (DC)
92. Hitman #24 (DC)
93. Shi: The Series #6 (Crusade)
94. The Power of Shazam! #36 (DC)
95. Bone #31 (Cartoon Books)
96. Shi: Heaven and Earth #4 (Crusade)
97. Marvel Team-Up #7 (Marvel)
98. Superboy #49 (DC)
99. Legion of Super-Heroes #102 (DC)
100. Moon Knight #3 (Marvel)

'CAP' GUARDS REAR FLANK

• ***Captain America* #3** (No. 9)—It's still early, but Marvel Comics' hyped-up "Heroes Return" titles are starting to spread out in terms of sales. Bringing up the rear? *Captain America*, a title Marvel has already decided to expand upon. Cap gets a second book in July, but if Marvel had seen this chart beforehand, it may have had second thoughts about banking on Cap's readership.

• ***Lady Death* #1** (No. 30)—The so-called "Bad Girl" craze might be in the grave, but this li'l undead lassie from Chaos! Comics is still live 'n' kickin'! This *Lady Death* #1 starts the company's first ongoing, monthly *Lady Death* series, which Chaos! hopes will inspire greater reader loyalty.

• ***Green Lantern* #96, *The Flash* #135, *Green Arrow* #130** (Nos. 37, 40, 69)—With readers crossing titles to get all three parts of this crossover story, *GL*, the top seller of the three anyway, got some help. *Flash* also got a nice bump. But the big winner is *Green Arrow*, which almost *doubled* its usual sales. With that kind of win, think we'll see another crossover between the titles next year? Oh, yeah.

• ***Scarlet Crush* #1** (No. 39)—Yum! It's Scarlet Crush, the new soft drink with the fizz to make you…okay, maybe it's not a soft drink. But when an unknown property like *Scarlet Crush* appears so high on the chart, it's always noteworthy. It would appear that Awesome Entertainment is building a strong brand name, and retailers are fondly remembering the money they made on *Avengelyne*, the previous title from *Crush*'s writer/artist John Stinsman.

• ***Astro City* #1/2** (No. 41)—This is a reprint. A *reprint*, we said! A reprint should not place at No. 41! Not unless it's a reprint of "The Nearness of You," which word-of-mouth says is one of the best "Astro City" stories ever. It was previously offered only as a *Wizard*-exclusive #1/2 issue, so this marks the first "general release" for the story, and orders were nothing short of great.

• ***Babylon 5: In Valen's Name* #1** (No. 67)—Enjoying a renaissance on TNT, the "Babylon 5" TV show is finally out of scheduling hell *and* back in comics. The first of this three-issue mini-series did well, fueled by its co-writers, J. Michael Straczynski ("Babylon 5" creator) and fan-favorite Peter David (*Incredible Hulk*).

ATTENTION COMIC BOOK RETAILERS:

If you're a retailer who would like to participate in our compiling of the *Wizard* Top 100 (and be a candidate for special incentives), please write to us at the address below.

Top 100 Coordinator
c/o Wizard Entertainment
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ROB LIEFELD

ANNOUNCED NEXT MONTH!

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BULL PEN

Former Mort of the Month Peeper welcomes you to the Miscellaneous *Wizard* Fun Section!

C.B.I.Q.

Games, puzzles and stuff that'll tickle your tummy with the taste of nuts and honey

comic book intelligence quotient

This time we'll compare your score with the most humiliating ways of defeating Hydro-Man, the menacing Spidey villain composed entirely of water. Ready?

Score	Rank
0-4	Lure him to an old-folks home and POW!, use him to fill 20 enema bags for senior citizens with questionable colons!
5-14	Have him follow you to France (*AHHHH!*), where water—a key ingredient of personal hygiene—is shunned by the foul-smelling general populace, forever traumatizing the villain!
15-19	Trap him in the urinal of a public restroom and KAPOW!, overpower him with the cleansing power of one of those giant mint urinal cakes!
20	Trick him into a suburban backyard and BLAMMO!, use him to fill a kiddie pool for incontinent toddlers!

1. From where did Psylocke get that goofy-ass tattoo over her eye?
A) from defeating the Event Horizon
B) from becoming one with the Siege Perilous
C) from entering the Crimson Dawn
D) from a fat, greasy tattoo artist at a joint called The Tattoo Ridiculous

2. In the "Heroes Reborn" Universe (Peeyeeww!), the collegiate clique of significantly smart students—including Reed Richards, Tony Stark, Hank Pym and Victor Von Doom—was known as:
A) the Knights of the Atomic Round Table.
B) the Apostles of the Atom.
C) the Nuclear Knights.
D) the Radioactive Dorks Club.

3. Which famous reporters schmoozed their way into StormWatch's recent news conference?
A) Wolf Blitzer and Connie Chung
B) Murphy Brown and Karl Kolchak
C) Lois Lane and Clark Kent
D) Peter Parker and Ben Urich

4. In the first issue of *DV8*, what were those dysfunctional teens out to steal from the CIA?
A) the blueprints of the NORAD nuclear missile base
B) a top-secret file on I/O
C) a gene-splicing device that could create more pimple-faced, teenaged deviants (boy, just what the world needs)
D) a real ugly, pre-dissected space alien

5. "Namor" translates into this from Atlantean:
A) Avenging Son.
B) Imperious Rex.
C) Ocean Prince.
D) Todd.

6. Which Biblical figure was the first husband of Vampirella's mom, Lilith?
A) Cain
B) Adam
C) Ezekiel
D) God

7. Gotham City's losingest pro baseball team is:
A) the Gotham Monarchs.
B) the Gotham Knights.
C) the Gotham Ghosts.
D) the Gotham Wicked Googleys.

8. Besides wearing sexy lingerie, what do Superman's pal Dr. Hamilton, Warrior Areala Nun and Misty Knight have in common?
A) All have a college-graduate degree in science.
B) All are women.
C) All have a bionic arm.
D) All have been abused by Catholic priests.

9. And speaking of being abused by priests, DC's errant angel, Azrael, was biologically enhanced with the use of genetic material from what source?
A) an ape
B) a real angel
C) a Daxamite warrior
D) Bane

10. As S.H.I.E.L.D. agents, Spider-Man's parents were once sent to rescue S.H.I.E.L.D. Agent 10, a.k.a.:
A) Nick Fury.
B) Carol Danvers.
C) Captain America.
D) Wolverine.

11. In the quirky film "Chasing Amy," Banky Edwards and Holden McNeil collaborated on what comic title?
A) *Idiosyncratic Routine*
B) *Chasing Amy*
C) *Baby Dave*
D) *Bluntman and Chronic*

12. This aquatic bad guy was so heinous, so undeniably diabolical, so horribly evil that he killed Aquaman's gill-ladened son, Arthur Curry Jr.:
A) Black Manta.
B) Ocean Master.
C) Fisherman.
D) The Bearded Clam.

13. In the "Days of Future Past" storyline, how did Magneto end up confined to a wheelchair?
A) He was injured when the Scarlet Witch's hex power went out of control and he was crushed by some heavy debris.
B) His lower spine was partially ripped out by the mutant hound, Sabretooth.
C) He was shot in the back by a behavior-modified Mystique disguised as Storm.
D) His magnetic power went wild, causing a metal wheelchair to adhere to his fat white mutant ass.

14. Why'd ex-boxer Bibbo Bibbowski recently cold-cock Superman's other pal, newsboy Jimmy Olsen?
A) Jimmy, in a bout of stupidity, called big slobbering clod Bibbo a "big slobbering clod."
B) Jimmy announced on TV how Supes' new powers worked, thus giving the hero's foes deadly info to use against him.
C) In a case of mistaken identity, Jimmy punched out Bibbo's mother, proclaiming, "She's a man, baby!"
D) A drunken Bibbo punched him when "Mr. Action" said something really cruel about the Spice Girls.

15. Which obnoxious superhero fan has been ruining Louis Martin's (a.k.a. Major Bummer) life?
A) Jeff Pearlman
B) Robbie Robertson
C) Milton Tweeleg
D) Snapper Carr

16. Which criminal scumbag or group massacred X-Force muscleman Warpath's tribe?
A) Dr. Doom
B) The Friends of Humanity
C) Stryfe
D) HYDRA

17. Who was DC's first and only superpowered Commie agent for the U.S.S.R.?
A) KGBeast
B) Rocket Red
C) Starfire
D) Comrade Borscht

18. Before USAgent got those fancy energy shields, what happened to his vibranium shield?
A) Klaw stole it and formed it into his new sonic weapon.
B) USAgent chucked it in the ocean at a point when he was undecided whether to continue to be a superhero.
C) It was sucked into the Negative Zone during an attempt to save his fellow Avengers' lives.
D) He lost it in a poker game with Deadpool's bud Weasel.

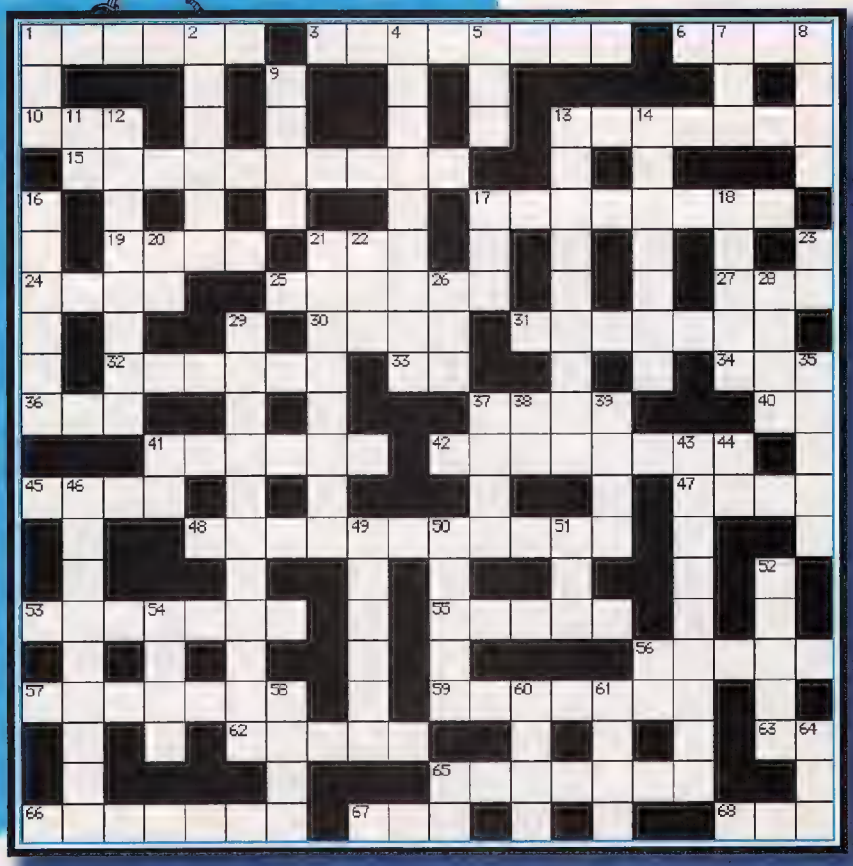
19. What's unique about Elektra's hot gal pal, Konnie Weiss?
A) Like Elektra, Konnie died and was reborn by magic.
B) She's the fiancée of martial arts superstar King Lau.
C) She used to be a man.
D) This freaky deaky can be described as all of the above.

20. What shocking secret did "little person" Puck discover about the seemingly mindless Sasquatch?
A) Sasquatch is really scientist Walter Langowski, suffering from amnesia.
B) Sasquatch is not Walter Langowski at all, but a real, live Bigfoot.
C) A mystical shaman had stolen Langowski's intellect, causing him to transform into a mindless Sasquatch.
D) Everybody loves midgets. *Everybody*.

WIZARD CROSSWORD

you know, across, down, that sort of stuff

TOO TOUGH?
Don't be a whiner.
The answers are on page 214.



ACROSS

1. brand-new, bone-wielding X-Man
3. Pete Wisdom's former agency
6. Starjamming amphibian
10. Harras or Silent
13. killed 18 down's love; _____ Hodge
15. Radioactive Man's sidekick
17. Neal Adams character
19. Poison Ivy's weapon
21. Hellshock creator
24. Flash-hating Captain
25. Swordsman's martial-arts-using lover
27. Thor, Hercules or Highfather
30. Haley or Murdock
31. *Mage: The Hero* _____
32. Cable clone
33. *New Warriors* scribe; initials
34. Foggy Nelson's girl
36. Homer Simpson exclamation
37. Alan Moore's _____ *Hell*
40. "__ evil shall escape my sight!"
41. writer of Image's *Battlestar Galactica*
42. Plutonian Guardian of the Galaxy
45. Comic Book Legal Defense Fund mascot
47. Silver Surfer can _____ on the spaceways
48. Blue Beetle's JLA buddy
53. one Bird of Prey was this
55. Don Hall and Wiley Wolverman
56. gave Batman a son
57. Superman's swimming ex-squeeze
59. Forever People cowboy
62. Azrael's saint
63. works for Cogswell's Cogs; init.
65. Max Mercury's Indian name
66. Prof. X can stop you with this
67. Johnny Quick and Liberty Belle's team; init.
68. Peyer or Palmer

DOWN

1. comic-adapting alien film; init.
2. Dept. H lieutenant
4. Impulse's archer ally
5. short-lived "Star Trek: Voyager" gal
7. female Warlock
8. WetWorks leader or Polaris
9. color of "superior" Kree
11. Hall __ Justice
12. Marc Slayton
13. Penguin
14. aquatic Global Guardian; Little _____
16. "Engage!"
17. Legion leader's nickname
18. original, rich X-Man
20. "Wizard of __" comic strip
21. Man-Wolf and *Bugle* publisher
22. Crusade's cornerstone Christian
23. *Preacher* and *Gen13* artist; init.
26. "...a plane! ___ Superman!"
28. Thor's powerful pop
29. Cybernary is this
35. hero played by Antonio Banderas
37. Vampirella uses this a lot
38. absurdly wealthy comic book kid; init.
39. Joker lost it years ago
41. Marv Wolfman's team title; init.
43. The Tenth's gal pal
44. Acclaim armor
46. Evil Ernie's plan
49. Dr. Reyes deals with this
50. Green Lantern's favorite coffee shop
51. Jubilation or Stan
52. Skywalker's fighter
54. Quantum and Woody's lovable mascot
56. John Byrne's inker; init.
58. new Flash foe
60. invented unstable molecules
61. Wally West needs lots of this
64. leader of WildStorm or *Enterprise*
65. creator of *Maus*; init.

BULL PEN

France Surrenders!

Wizard went to Europe.

Well, not all of us, but Editor-in-Chief Pat McCallum, Staff Writer Matt Senreich and Specials Editor Doug Goldstein packed their bags, set their timer-lights and bid farewell to good food for a week-long vacation in London and Paris. While the crew was wowed by the unbelievable beauty of the two places (fact: London kicks ass over Paris), a series of postcards, dubbed "*Wizard* War Journals," showed the pitfalls of vacationing in countries where the residents resent Americans. Presented here are the more educational excerpts and observations pulled from their correspondence...

ENGLAND:

- "Everybody drives on the wrong side of the street and seems to want us dead. Us: 3, cabbies: 0."
- "Nobody here speaks American. Our hip slang has been rendered useless."
- "Tickets to the Benny Hill show are, like, impossible to get."

FRANCE:

- "If you don't know French, you have to break the law."
- "The French are annoying and resent American tourists, but that's okay because in a couple of decades, their culture will be dead and there'll be a McDonald's on the moon."
- "There's no way you can bungee-jump off the Eiffel Tower. That 'An American Werewolf in Paris' flick is full of crap."

Photo: Matt Senreich (Hey! One of us hadda take it.)

One of the Damned

THIS MONTH'S VICTIM: Greg Orlando, copy editor

Why we pay him: "I help copy-edit *Wizard* and write 'Picks,' 'If You Missed...' and 'Casting Call.' That and mercilessly torment my fellow Copy Editor Marc Wilkofsky."

Best out-of-context quote: "If you don't touch the joystick for a while, Mario goes to sleep." (In reference to the N64's *Super Mario* video game.)

Most bizarre *Wizard* moment: "Walking into the offices of *Wizard*'s sister magazine *ToyFare* and noticing everything covered in Saran Wrap. Then following a trail of plastic scraps back to my desk, where I found a pair of scissors with a small piece of wrap in them. I was framed."

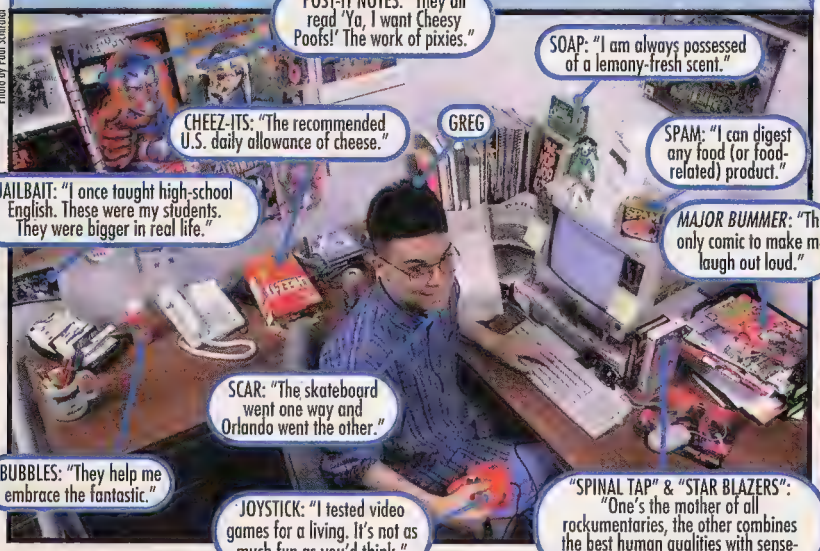


Photo by Paul Schiraldi

WIZARD TOP TEN

Top 10 reasons the JLA WON'T be helping Batman during the Bat-quake

10. Confused "quake" with toasted oats breakfast cereal, figured Bats could handle this one solo.
9. Entire team in sugar-induced coma after the annual release of Cadbury's Creme Eggs.
8. Batman's whole "youthful ward in tights" thing finally skeeved them out.
7. The bridge into Gotham's down.
6. Too busy re-reading the "Rock of Ages" storyline from *JLA* #10-#15 and trying to figure out what the &%$@ was going on.
5. They don't want to lose their spots in line for "Titanic."
4. Unwritten rule: Avoid anything that smug Batman prefaces with "Bat." "Batcave," "Batmobile," "Bat-quake"? Pompous ass.
3. Everyone's busy taking literature and physics classes so they can handle whatever *JLA* writer Grant Morrison throws at 'em.
2. Heard about Clooney's paparazzi boycott, got confused, boycotted everything dealing with Batman.
1. Earthquakes are definitely beneath the world's most pretentious superteam.

CONTEST WINNERS

DEADPOOL'S ALL MIXED UP, *Wizard* #75:
Brian Hilgeford, Louisville, Ky.
Here are the answers! Go nuts!
1. Blind Alfred; 2. Siryn; 3. Weasel; 4. T-Ray; 5. Typhoid Mary; 6. Patch

THE CROW SOARS AGAIN, #75:
Troy Jackson, Loveland, Colo.

DRAW A COVER OF *DARKCHYLDE*, #75:
Austin Stewart, Sanborn, Iowa

HULK/DROP THE GAMMA BOMB, #76:
Shaun Martens, Coaldale, Alberta, Canada

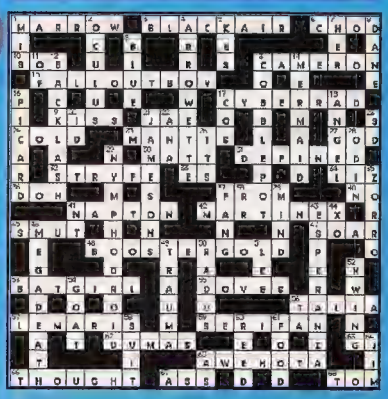
C.B.I.Q. answers...

from page 212

1. C	5. A	9. A	13. A	17. C
2. A	6. B	10. D	14. B	18. B
3. D	7. B	11. D	15. C	19. D
4. D	8. C	12. A	16. C	20. B

CROSSWORD answers...

from page 213



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WIZARD®

#81

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CABLE COVER BY LADRÓNN

AVENGERS COVER BY GEORGE PÉREZ

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By Peter Sanderson

NEW WEB-SLINGER IN TOWN

Todd McFarlane revitalized the look of 'The Amazing Spider-Man' 10 years ago

1988 1987 1986 1985 1984 1983 1982 1981 1980 1979 1978 1977 1976 1975 1974 1973

AT FIRST GLANCE, the new artist on *Amazing Spider-Man* #298 didn't seem all that special. In fact, the book's opening shots of Peter Parker and his *Daily Bugle* colleagues were downright dull. But when Peter changed into his Spider-Man costume, everything changed. And the world knew Todd McFarlane would soon be a force to be reckoned with.

Suddenly, Spider-Man was more alive than he'd been in a long time. Points of view tilted, turning city streets into dizzying canyons. Spidey's eyes grew huge. He found himself in the most bizarre positions. Even his webbing changed a bit. It was a renaissance of sorts for the wall-crawler. And fans certainly took notice.

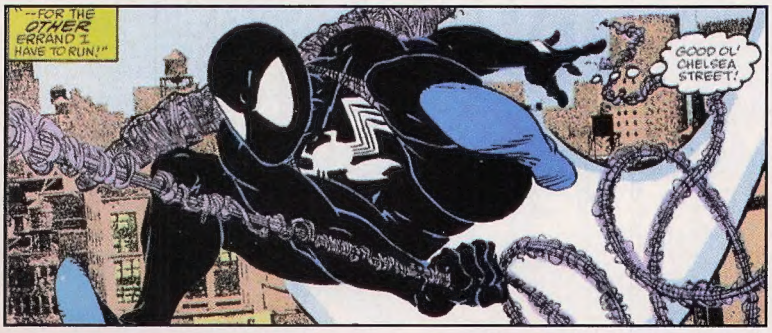
"It forced me to see if I could put a '90s spin on a character who had been born in the '60s and hadn't really been updated," says McFarlane of his work on *Amazing*. "It forced me to think through how I could add my little fingerprint to the character, with the 'spaghetti' webbing, the funky poses and making the eyes bigger."

Spider-Man proved to be just the character McFarlane needed for his artistic development to kick into high gear. But besides Spidey's updated look, McFarlane helped give something else to Web-head: Venom. The shadowy, violent villain made a brief cameo in McFarlane's first *Amazing* issue, and quickly went on to become one of Spider-Man's toughest foes.

While McFarlane's earlier work on DC's *Infinity, Inc.* and "Batman: Year Two" (*Detective Comics* #575-#578) made few readers take notice, it wasn't until his run on Marvel's *The Incredible Hulk* that McFarlane became a fan favorite. His Spidey work just pushed him that much higher, and he rapidly became one of Marvel's most popular artists. In fact, in 1990, Marvel launched a title simply called *Spider-Man* for McFarlane to write, draw and ink all on his own. But roughly two years later, McFarlane and five other artists broke away from Marvel to found Image Comics, a creator-owned haven for artists. Both then and now, Image's best-selling title has been McFarlane's *Spawn*, which has since gone on to further fame with a live-action movie and animated television series.

The secret to McFarlane's success? According to the artist, it's all about perspective.

"The only way to set yourself apart, to garner some attention to your art as a young person, is to take ideas and turn 'em sideways a little bit, present ideas a little differently," sums up McFarlane. "Then people will either say it's the kookiest thing they ever saw or it's the *coolest* thing they ever saw. Luckily for me, with most of the changes I made, the audience liked the same things I did." W



DATELINE: MARCH 1988

Tim Burton freaked out moviegoers with his kooky film *"Beetlejuice."*...NBC ruled Thursday nights with *"The Cosby Show,"* "A Different World" and "Cheers."...Rick Astley's *"Never Gonna Give You Up"* topped *Billboard*'s music charts....*Oliver North* and others were indicted by a federal grand jury in the Iran-Contra political scandal. •

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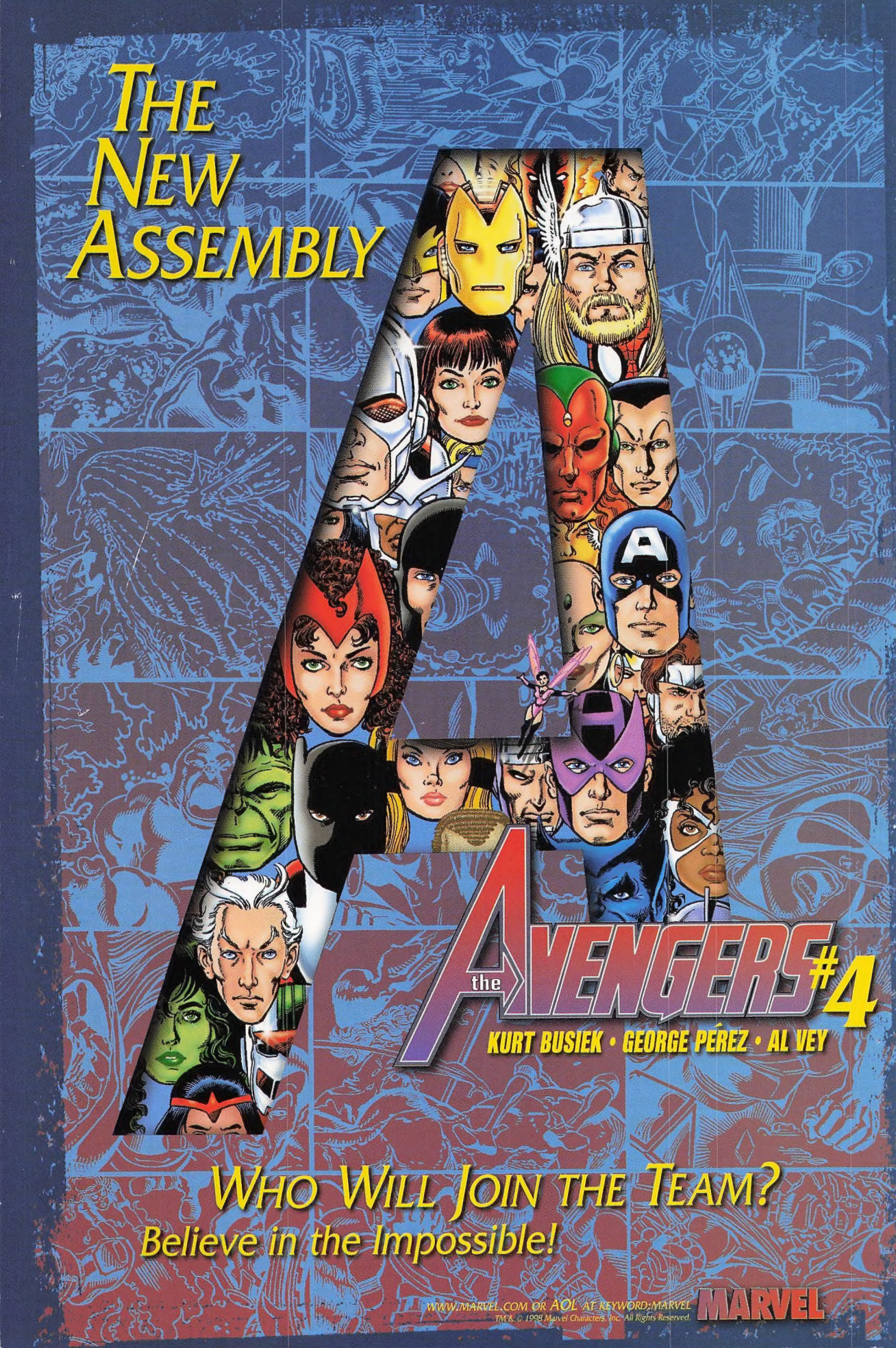
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